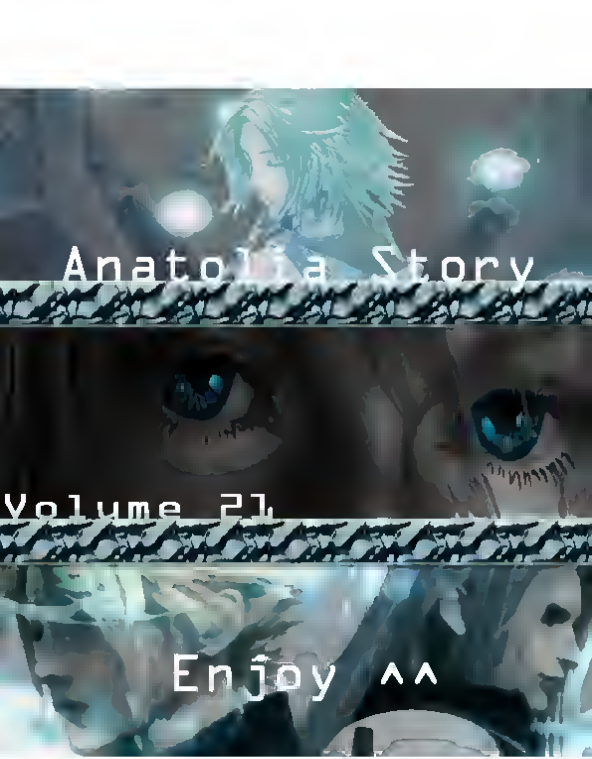



Greetings FFRomee

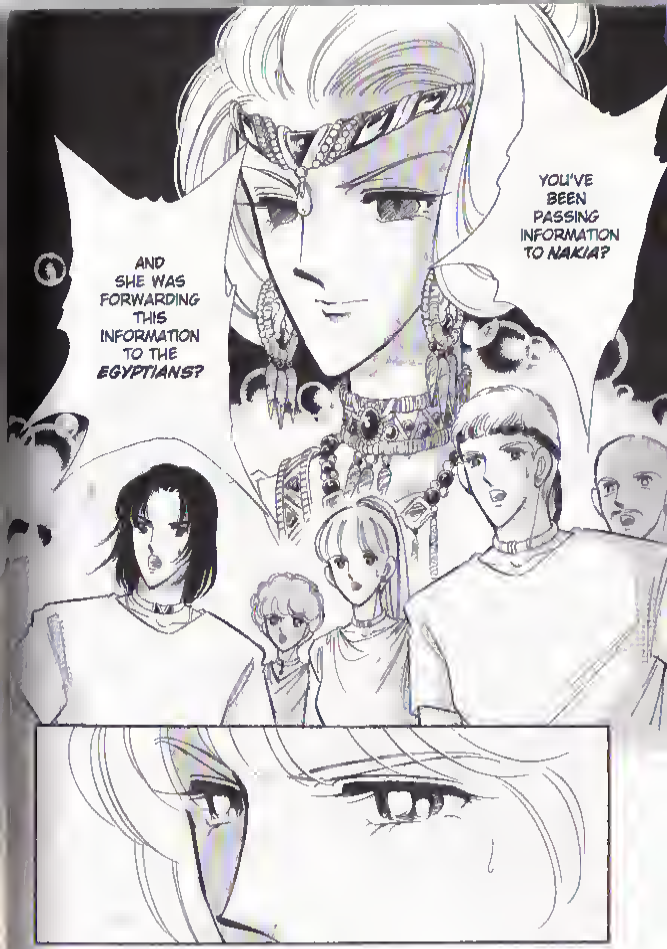
VIZ media

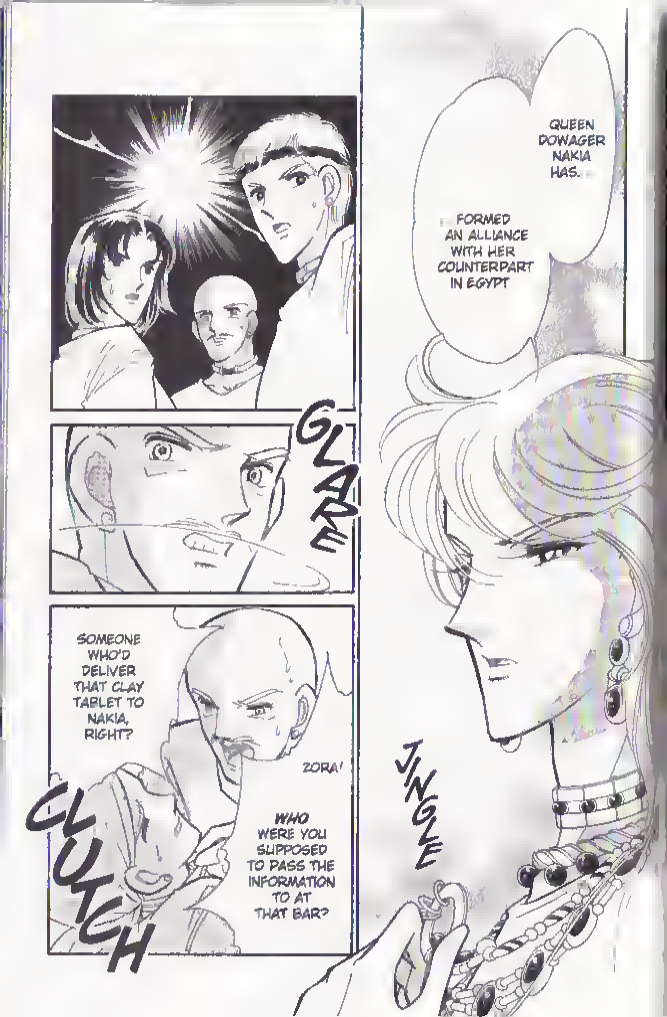
shôjo

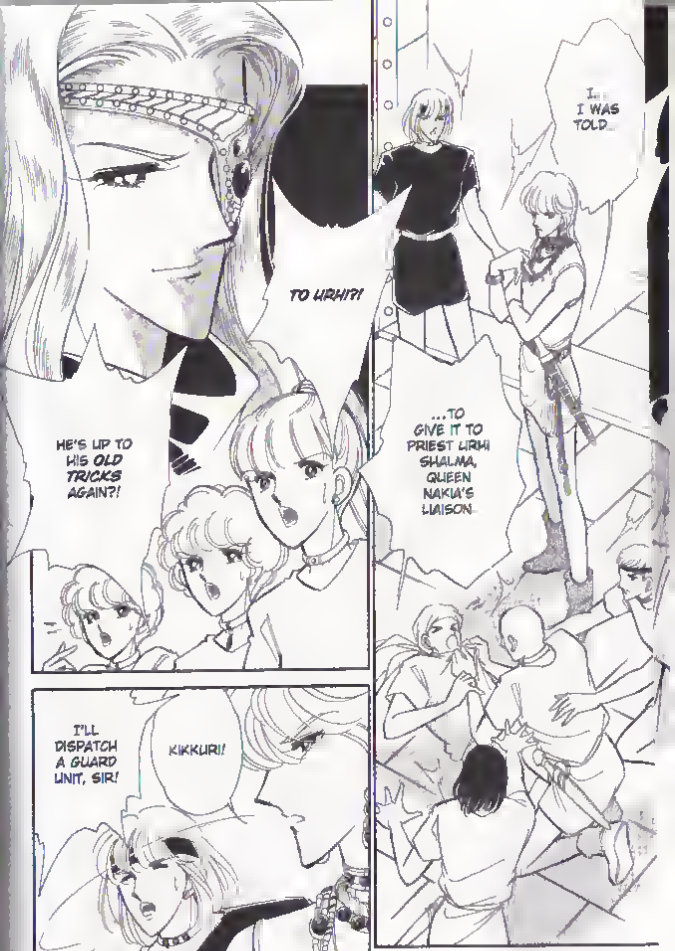
# RED RIVER

21

story and art by **Chie Shinohara**

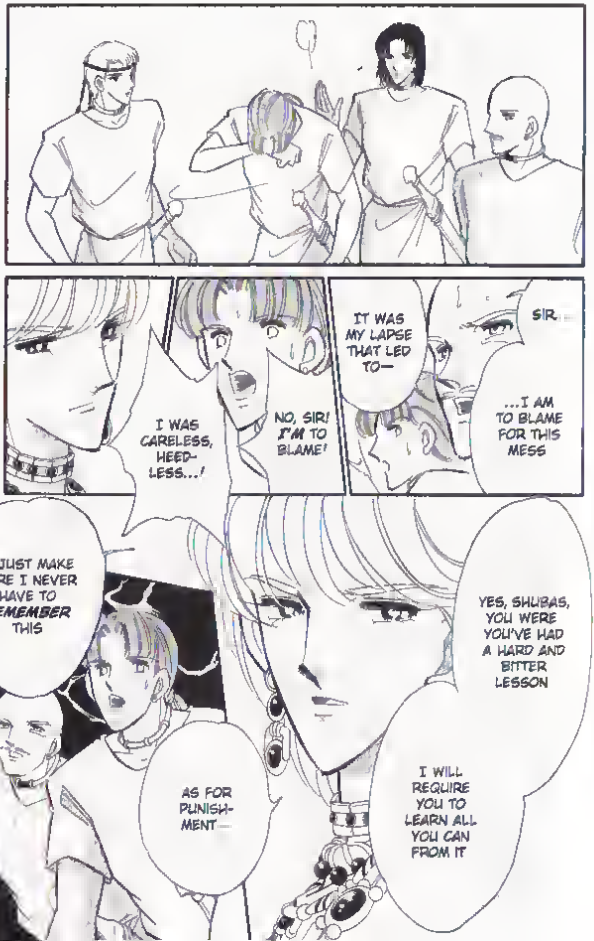

YOU'VE BEEN PASSING INFORMATION TO NAKIA?
AND SHE WAS FORWARDING THIS INFORMATION TO THE EGYPTIANS?

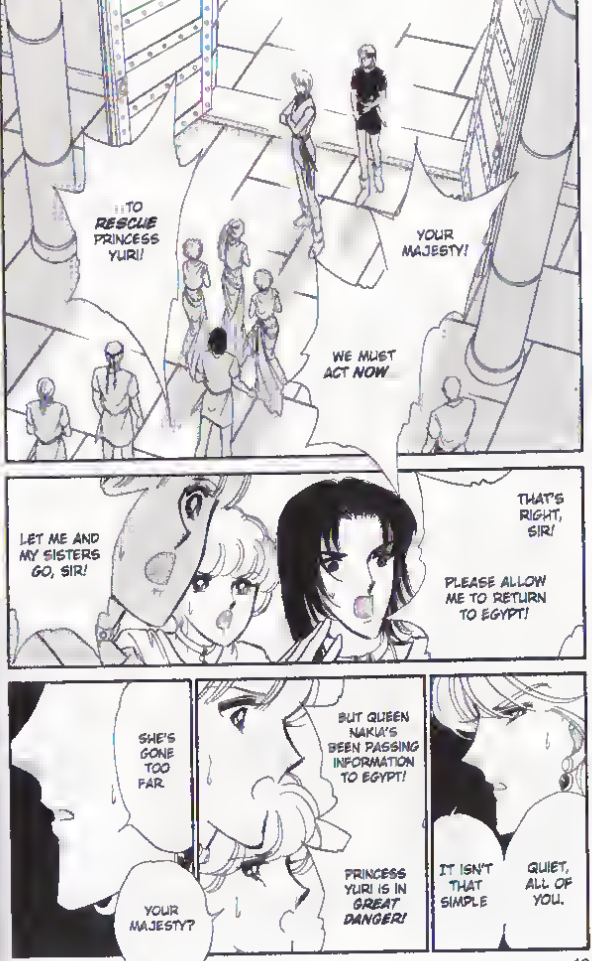

QUEEN DOWAGER NAKIA HAS...
FORMED AN ALLIANCE WITH HER COUNTERPART IN EGYPT
JINGLE
GLARE
SOMEONE WHO'D DELIVER THAT CLAY TABLET TO NAKIA, RIGHT?
ZORA!
CLUTCH
WHO WERE YOU SUPPOSED TO PASS THE INFORMATION TO AT THAT BAR?

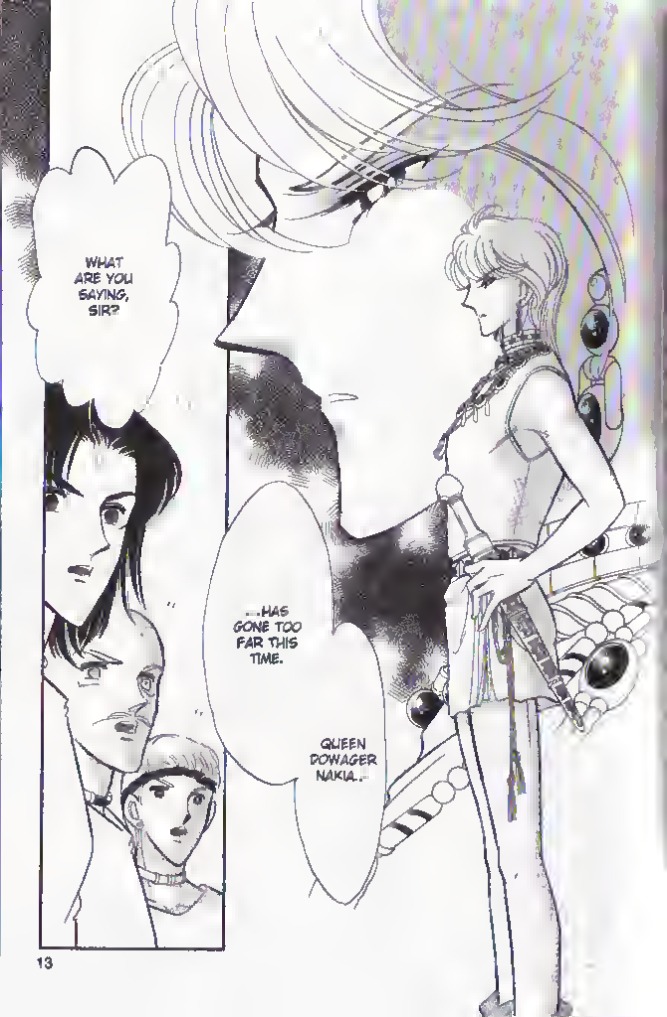

I... I WAS TOLD...
...TO GIVE IT TO PRIEST URHI SHALMA, QUEEN NAKIA'S LIAISON.
TO URHI?!
HE'S UP TO HIS OLD TRICKS AGAIN?!
KIKKURI!
I'LL DISPATCH A GUARD UNIT, SIR!

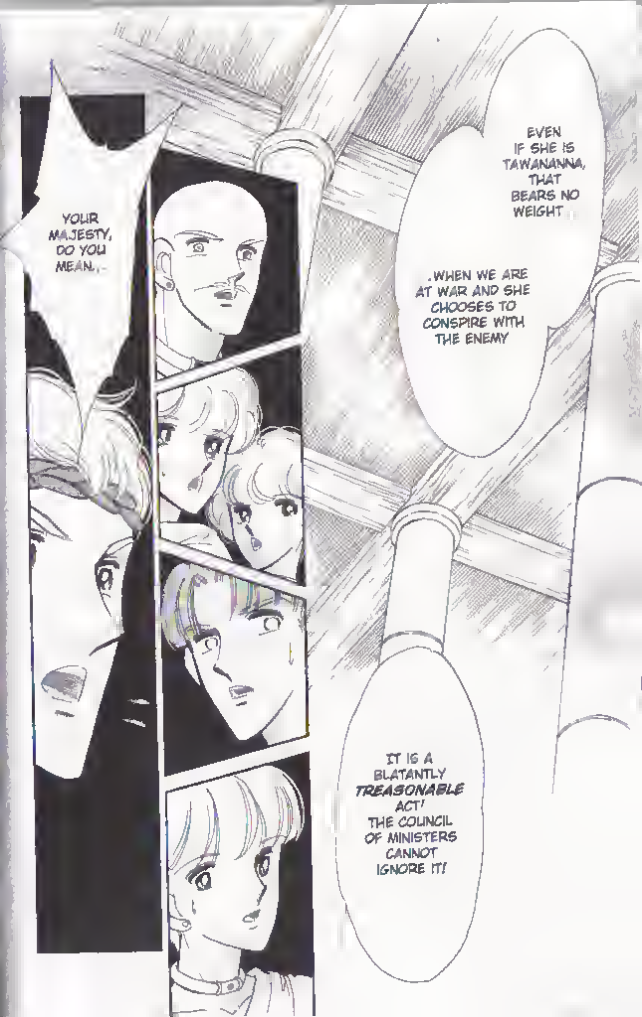
CLUTCH
I TRUSTED YOU...
...BECAUSE I THOUGHT WE WERE CLOSE FRIENDS, THAT YOU'D NEVER DIVULGE PRIVILEGED INFORMATION!
HOW COULD I BE SO WRONG?!
ZORA!
WHY DID YOU BECOME AN AGENT FOR QUEEN NAKIA?!
IN RETURN FOR HELPING HER, QUEEN NAKIA PROMISED ME A PROMOTION.
SHUBAS...
WHY ONLY YOU SHUBAS?!
I'M AS CAPABLE AS YOU ARE!
YOU AND I WERE AIDES TO COMMANDING OFFICERS THEN YOU WERE PROMOTED AND I WASN'T

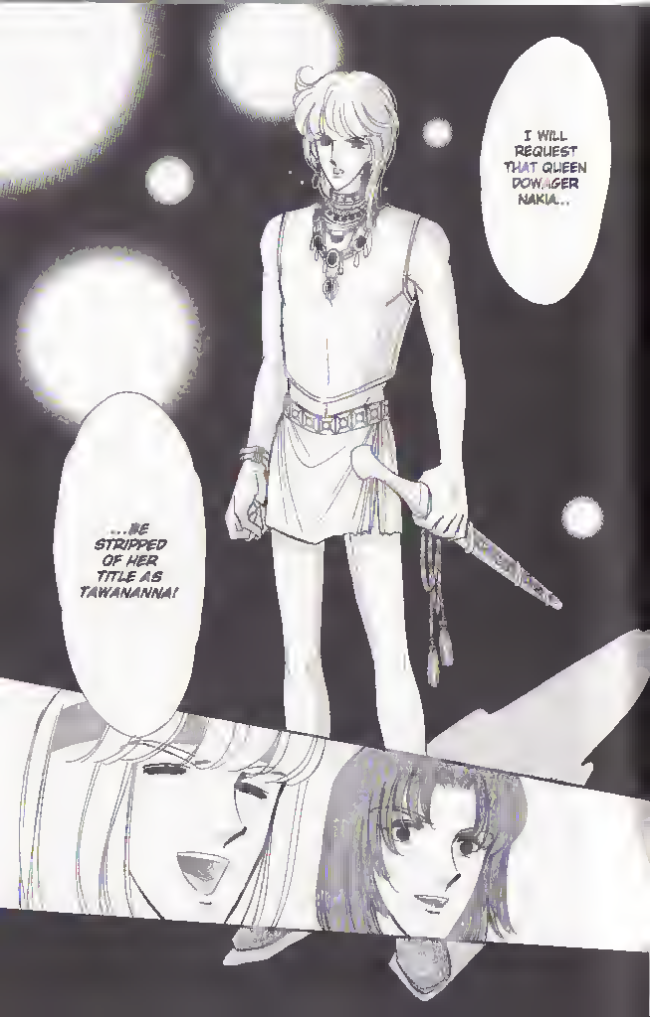
TREACHER-OUS DOG!
STOP IT, SHUBAS!
TAKE ZORA AWAY. I'LL DEAL WITH HIM LATER.
WHACK
I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.
I TRUSTED HIM. . NEVER THOUGHT HE'D..
ZORA AND I JOINED THE ARMY AROUND THE SAME TIME


I WAS CARELESS, HEED-LESS...!
NO, SIR! I'M TO BLAME!
IT WAS MY LAPSE THAT LED TO—
SIR...
...I AM TO BLAME FOR THIS MESS
I JUST MAKE SURE I NEVER HAVE TO REMEMBER THIS
AS FOR PUNISH-MENT—
YES, SHUBAS, YOU WERE YOU'VE HAD A HARD AND BITTER LESSON
I WILL REQUIRE YOU TO LEARN ALL YOU CAN FROM IT

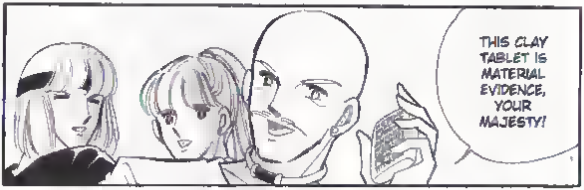

TO RESCUE PRINCESS YURI!
YOUR MAJESTY!
WE MUST ACT NOW
LET ME AND MY SISTERS GO, SIR!
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR!
PLEASE ALLOW ME TO RETURN TO EGYPT!
SHE'S GONE TOO FAR
YOUR MAJESTY?
BUT QUEEN NAKIA'S BEEN PASSING INFORMATION TO EGYPT!
PRINCESS YURI IS IN GREAT DANGER!
IT ISN'T THAT SIMPLE
QUIET, ALL OF YOU.


WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, SIR?
...HAS GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME.
QUEEN DOWAGER NAKIA..

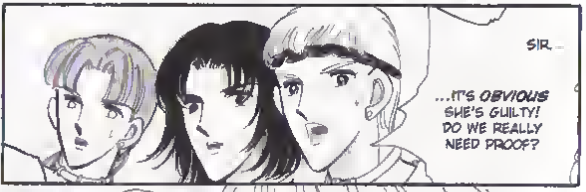

EVEN IF SHE IS TAWANANNA, THAT BEARS NO WEIGHT
.WHEN WE ARE AT WAR AND SHE CHOOSES TO CONSPIRE WITH THE ENEMY
IT IS A BLATANTLY *TREASONABLE* ACT! THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CANNOT IGNORE IT!
YOUR MAJESTY, DO YOU MEAN, -

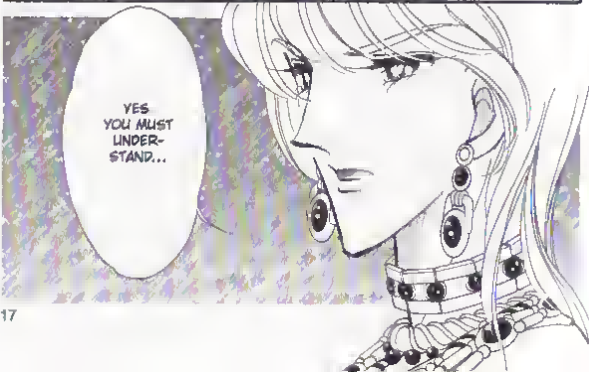

I WILL REQUEST THAT QUEEN DOWAGER NAKIA...
...BE STRIPPED OF HER TITLE AS TAWANANNA!

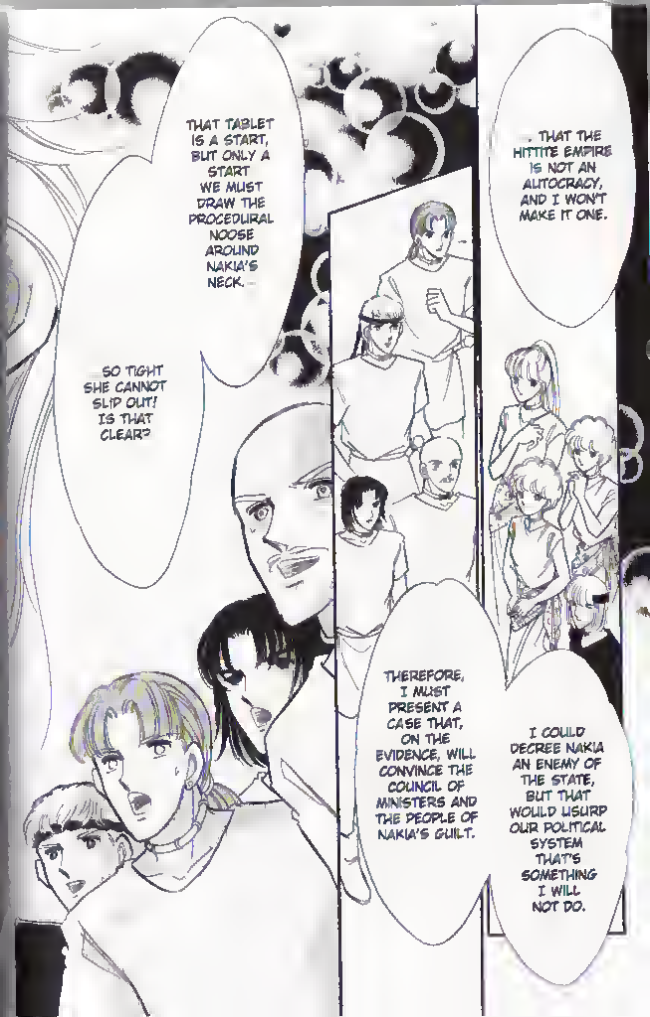
HURRAH
NAKIA OUSTED AT LAST!
HOW WE'VE PRAYED FOR THIS DAY!
I'LL SEND A MESSENGER TO HATTUSA AT ONCE, SIR!
WAIT!
WE MUST FIRST GATHER THE EVIDENCE!

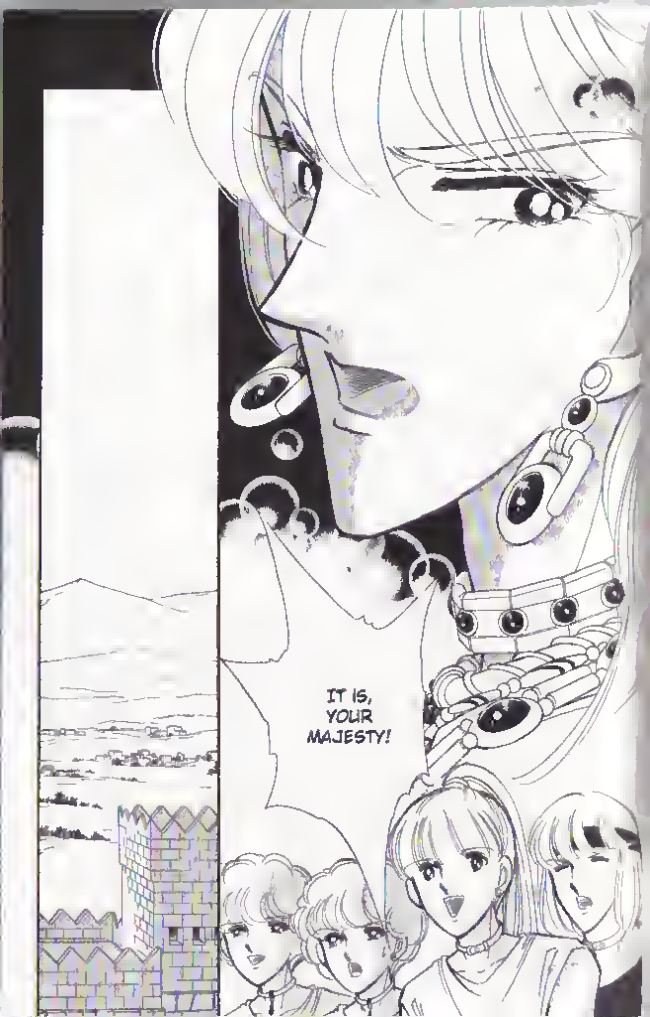

THIS CLAY TABLET IS MATERIAL EVIDENCE, YOUR MAJESTY!

WE CAN'T PRESENT IT AS CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF HER TREACHERY.
NAKIA WAS CAREFUL NOT TO ADDRESS IT OR SIGN IT!
IT'S NOT ENOUGH

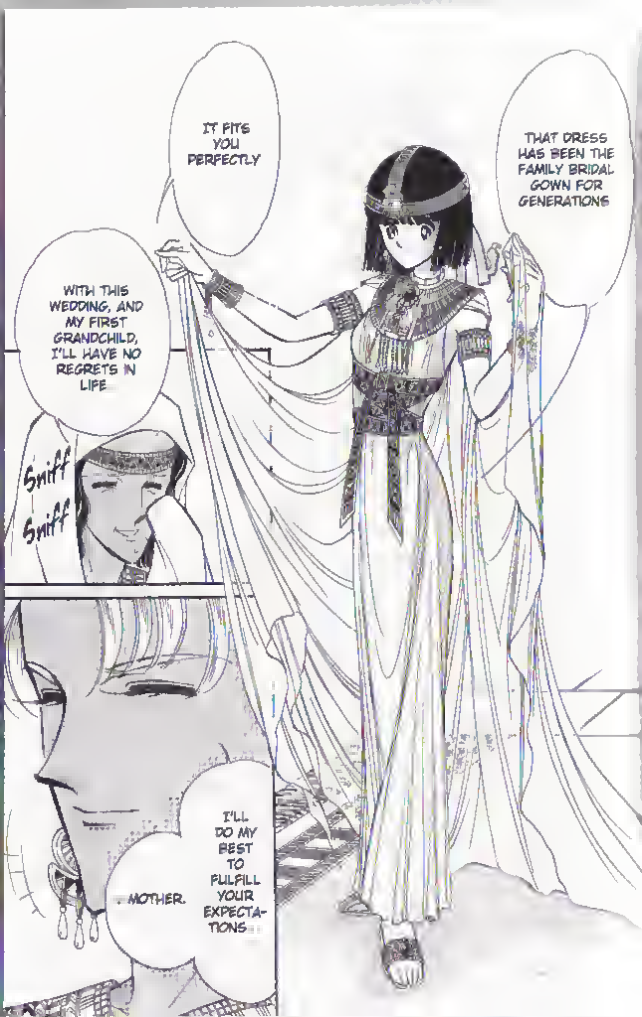

SIR...
...IT'S OBVIOUS SHE'S GUILTY! DO WE REALLY NEED PROOF?

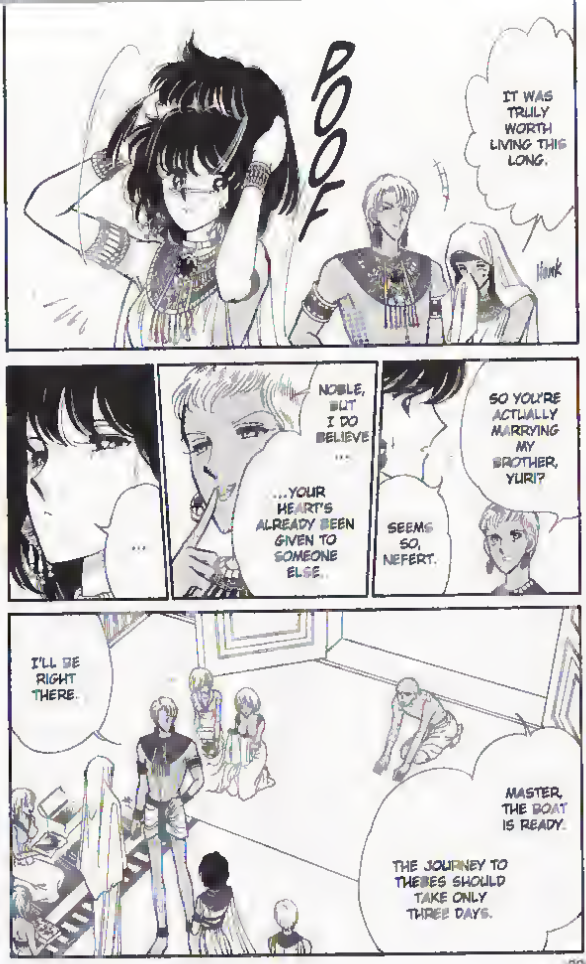

YES YOU MUST UNDER-STAND...


. THAT THE HITTITE EMPIRE IS NOT AN AUTOCRACY, AND I WON'T MAKE IT ONE.
I COULD DECREE NAKIA AN ENEMY OF THE STATE, BUT THAT WOULD USURP OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT'S SOMETHING I WILL NOT DO.
THEREFORE, I MUST PRESENT A CASE THAT, ON THE EVIDENCE, WILL CONVINCE THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND THE PEOPLE OF NAKIA'S GUILT.
THAT TABLET IS A START, BUT ONLY A START WE MUST DRAW THE PROCEDURAL NOOSE AROUND NAKIA'S NECK. –
SO TIGHT SHE CANNOT SLIP OUT! IS THAT CLEAR?

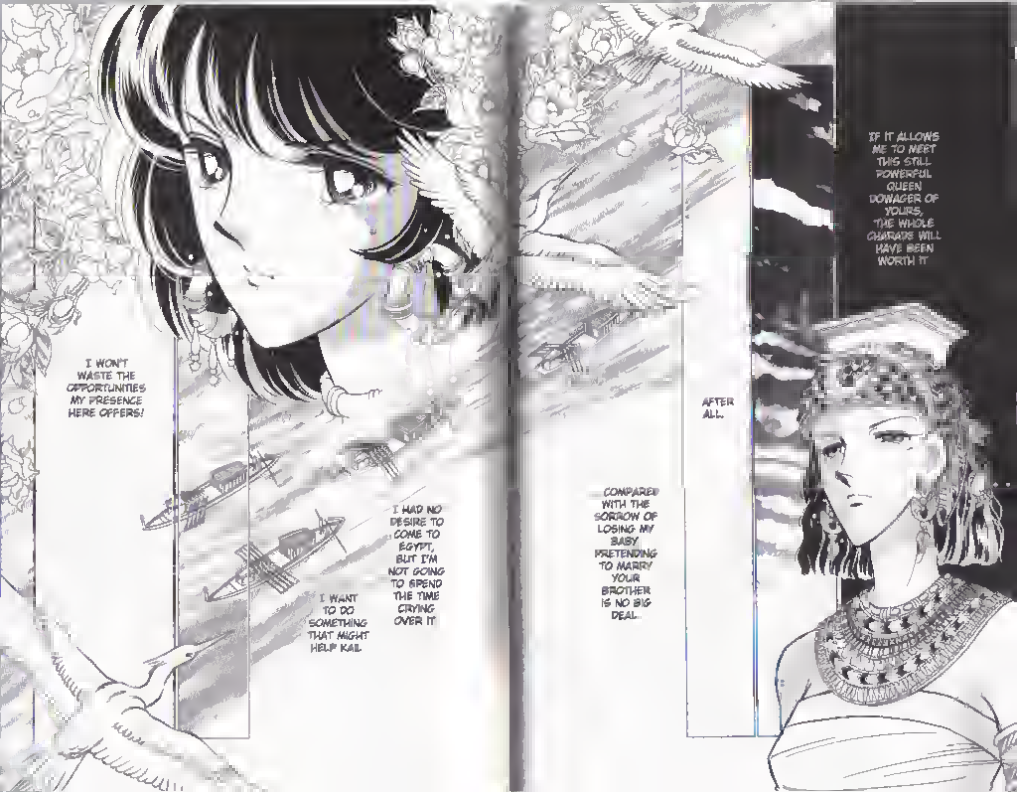

IT IS, YOUR MAJESTY!

EGYPT'S ANCIENT CITY, MEMPHIS...
YOU LOOK WONDER-FUL! ♡ ♡
OH MY...

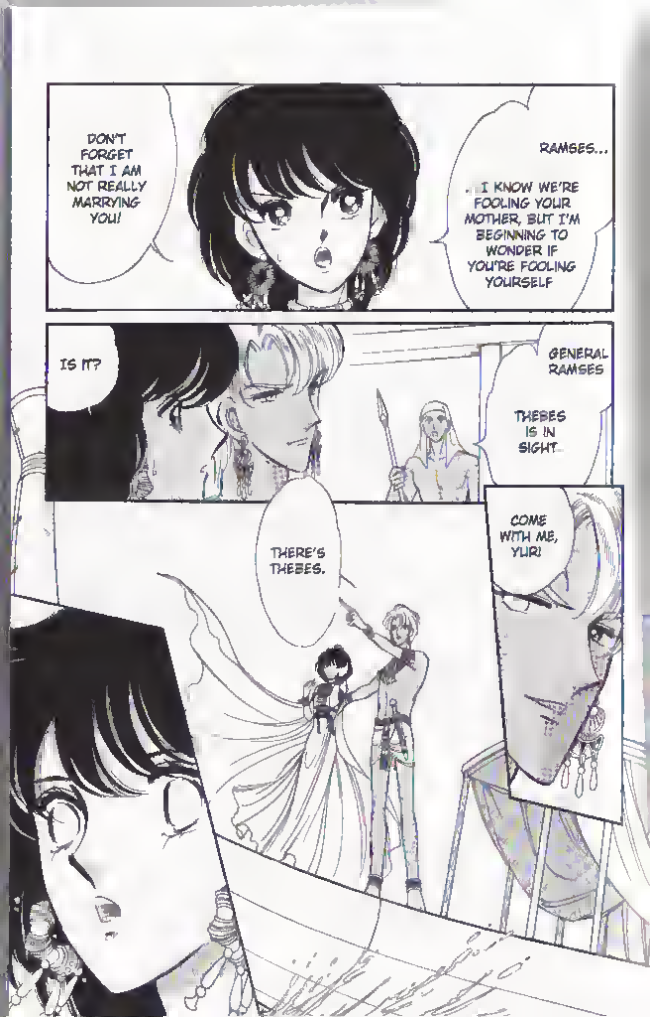

IT FITS YOU PERFECTLY
THAT DRESS HAS BEEN THE FAMILY BRIDAL GOWN FOR GENERATIONS
WITH THIS WEDDING, AND MY FIRST GRANDCHILD, I'LL HAVE NO REGRETS IN LIFE
Sniff Sniff
I'LL DO MY BEST TO FULFILL YOUR EXPECTATIONS
MOTHER.


DOOF
IT WAS TRULY WORTH LIVING THIS LONG.
Hank
...
NOBLE, BUT I DO BELIEVE...
...YOUR HEART'S ALREADY BEEN GIVEN TO SOMEONE ELSE.
SEEMS SO, NEFERT.
SO YOU'RE ACTUALLY MARRYING MY BROTHER, YURI?
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
MASTER, THE BOAT IS READY.
THE JOURNEY TO THEBES SHOULD TAKE ONLY THREE DAYS.

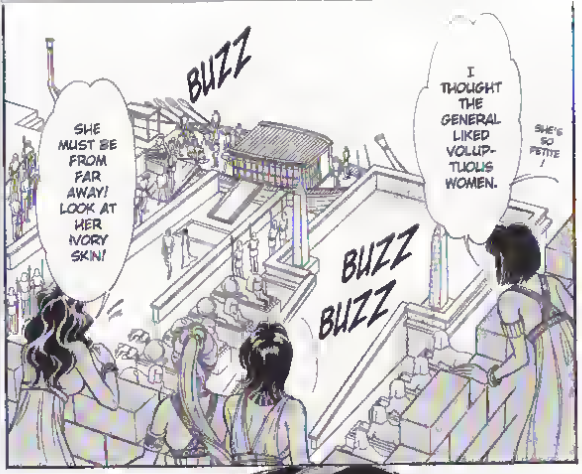
NEFERT, LISTEN...
LET'S GO, MY WIFE.
I AM IN NO WAY...
...UNSURE ABOUT THIS WEDDING. I WELCOME IT, IN FACT.

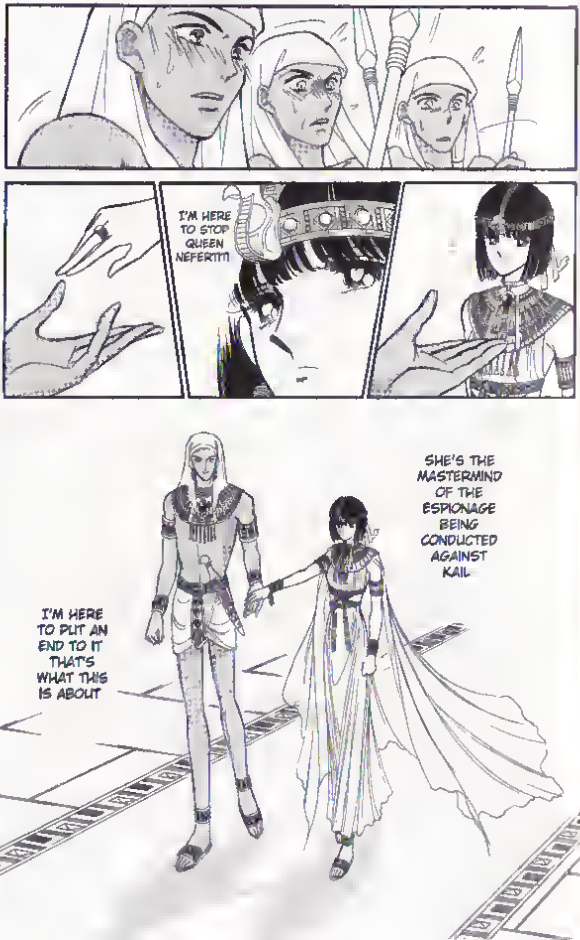

I WON'T WASTE THE OPPORTUNITIES MY PRESENCE HERE OFFERS!
I HAD NO DESIRE TO COME TO EGYPT, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO SPEND THE TIME CRYING OVER IT
I WANT TO DO SOMETHING THAT MIGHT HELP KAIL
COMPARED WITH THE SORROW OF LOSING MY BABY, PRETENDING TO MARRY YOUR BROTHER IS NO BIG DEAL
AFTER ALL,
IF IT ALLOWS ME TO MEET THIS STILL POWERFUL QUEEN DOWAGER OF YOURS, THE WHOLE CHARADE WILL HAVE BEEN WORTH IT

YOU'VE TOLD ME SO MANY TIMES I CAN RECITE IT ALL BY HEART
YES, AND WE WILL GREET THE KING'S FAMILY...
...AS SOON AS WE ARRIVE AT THEBES
I'LL GO OVER IT ONCE MORE
THE WEDDING WILL BE HELD AT A TEMPLE IN THEBES. AFTER TAKING AN OATH AT THE TEMPLE...
WHAT?
AFTER ALL, IT IS A WEDDING
I'M STILL AMAZED YOU'VE AGREED TO DO THIS
...WE WILL HOST A RECEPTION FOR IMPORTANT PRIESTS AND ARISTOCRATS THIS WILL LAST FOR SEVEN DAYS

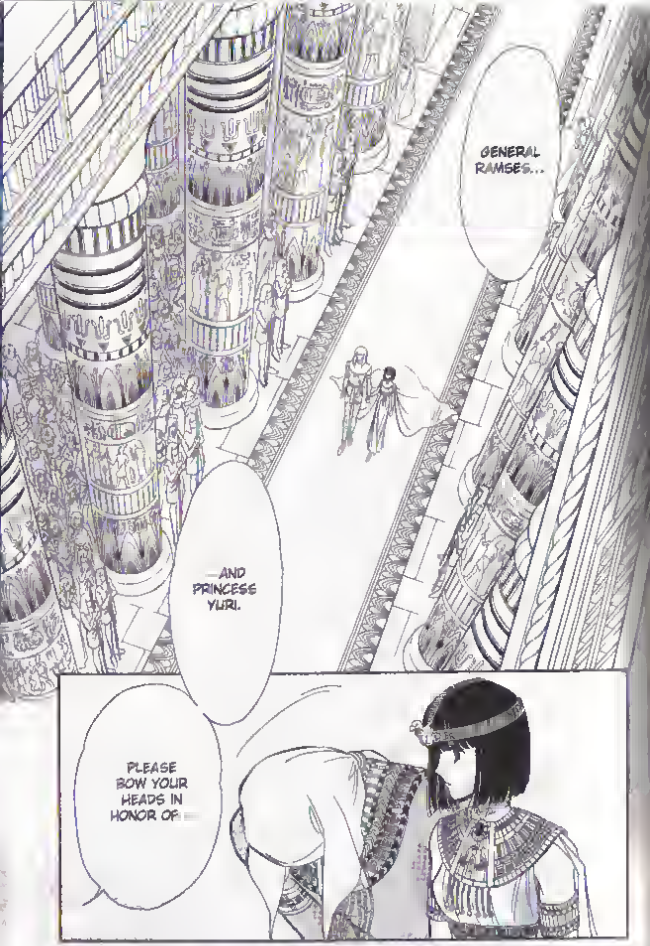

DON'T FORGET THAT I AM NOT REALLY MARRYING YOU!
RAMSES...
I KNOW WE'RE FOOLING YOUR MOTHER, BUT I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER IF YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF
IS IT?
GENERAL RAMSES
THEBES IS IN SIGHT.
COME WITH ME, YURI
THERE'S THEBES.

THE EGYPTIAN CAPITAL OF THEBES,...
THEBES IS THE MOST FAMOUS OF THE NUMEROUS CAPITALS OF ANCIENT EGYPT
PEOPLE CALLED THE STREETS ON THE EAST BANK OF THE NILE, "THEBES OF THE HUNDRED GATES."
ON THE WEST BANK OF THE NILE LAY THE ROYAL TOMBS KNOWN AS THE "VALLEY OF THE KINGS." THEBES WAS IN ITS PRIME
—THE WOMAN WHO'S FINALLY LANDED HIM.
HE'S WRIGGLED OFF SO MANY HOOKS IN THE PAST I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE.
GENERAL RAMSES WILL ARRIVE SOON
HE IS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS BRIDE
I'M JEALOUS!
HERE THEY ARE!
THE WOMAN BESIDE GENERAL RAMSES! SHE MUST BE HIS BRIDE!
OH, MY GOODNESS.
WHAT DOES SHE LOOK LIKE?

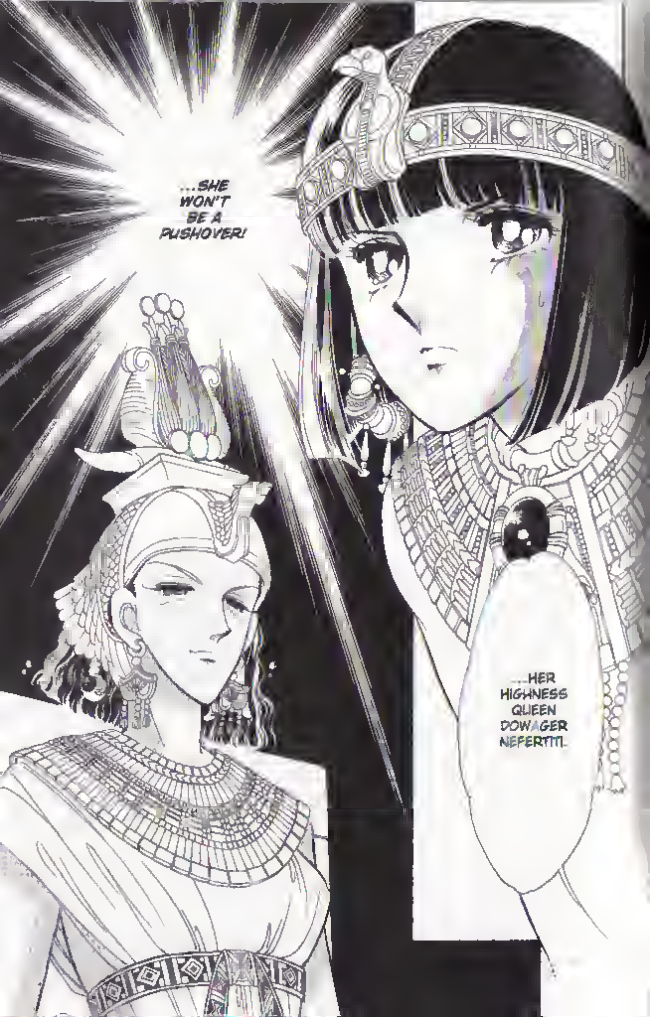

BUZZ
SHE MUST BE FROM FAR AWAY! LOOK AT HER IVORY SKIN!
I THOUGHT THE GENERAL LIKED VOLUP-TUOUS WOMEN.
SHE'S SO PETITE !
BUZZ
BUZZ

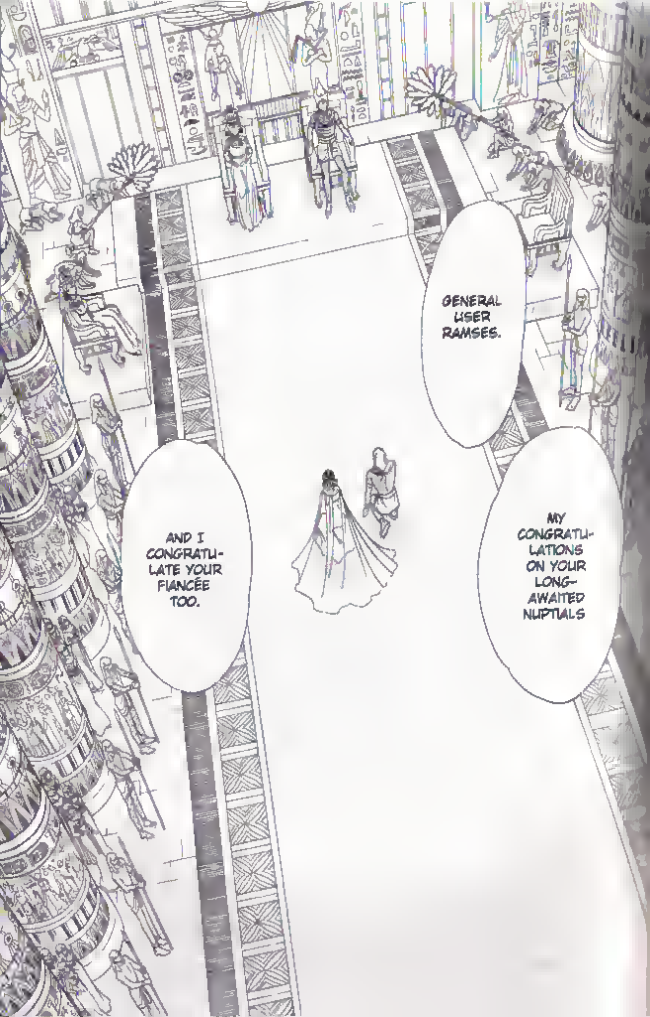

I'M HERE TO STOP QUEEN NEFERTITI
SHE'S THE MASTERMIND OF THE ESPIONAGE BEING CONDUCTED AGAINST KAIL
I'M HERE TO PUT AN END TO IT THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

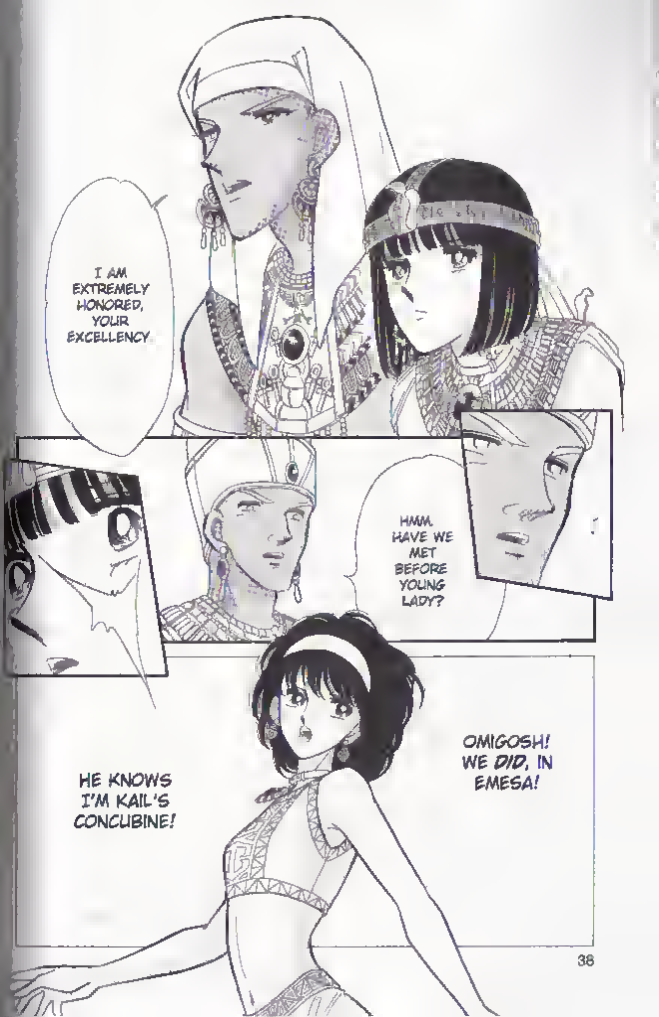
GULP
I DON'T YET KNOW HOW I'LL DO IT, BUT ..


GENERAL RAMSES...
—AND PRINCESS YURI.
PLEASE BOW YOUR HEADS IN HONOR OF

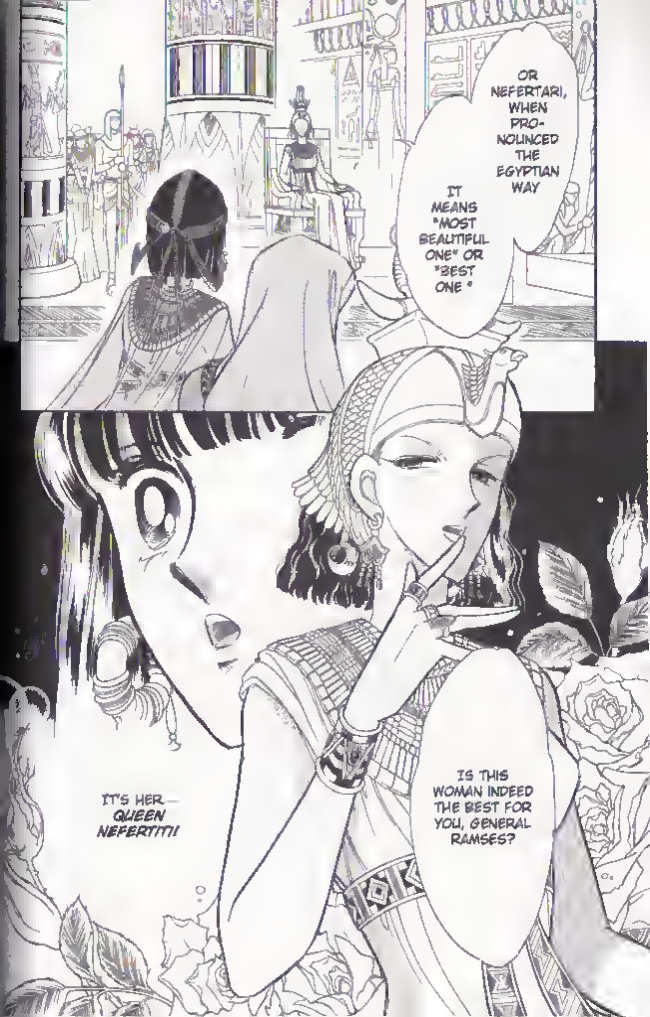
...HIS EXCELLENCY KING HOREMHEB...
...HER EXCELLENCY QUEEN MUTNODJMET...
...I'D BETTER THINK OF SOMETHING
...AND...
BECAUSE I'M SURE...

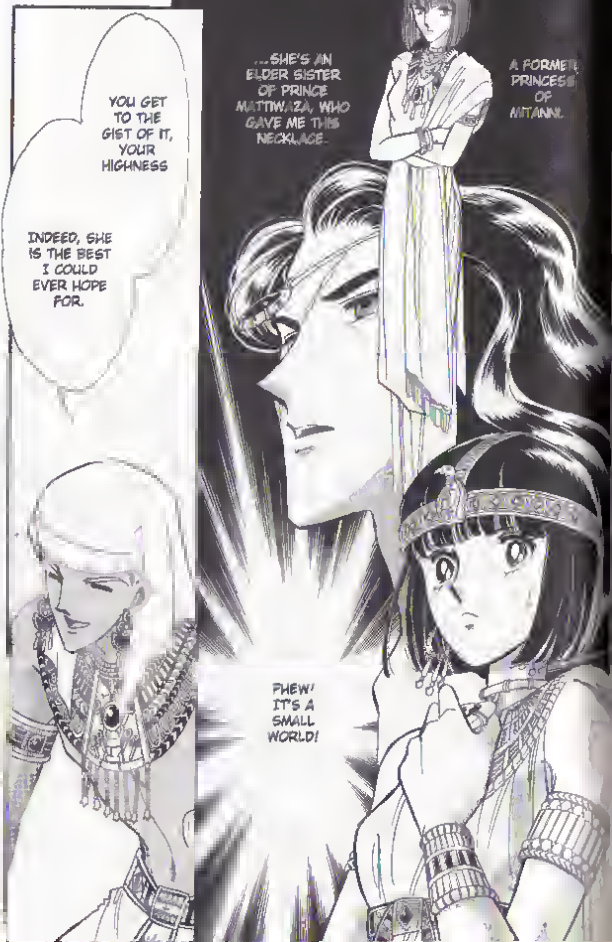

...SHE WON'T BE A PUSHOVER!
...HER HIGHNESS QUEEN DOWAGER NEFERTITI.


GENERAL USER RAMSES.
MY CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR LONG-AWAITED NUPTIALS
AND I CONGRATULATE YOUR FIANCÉE TOO.

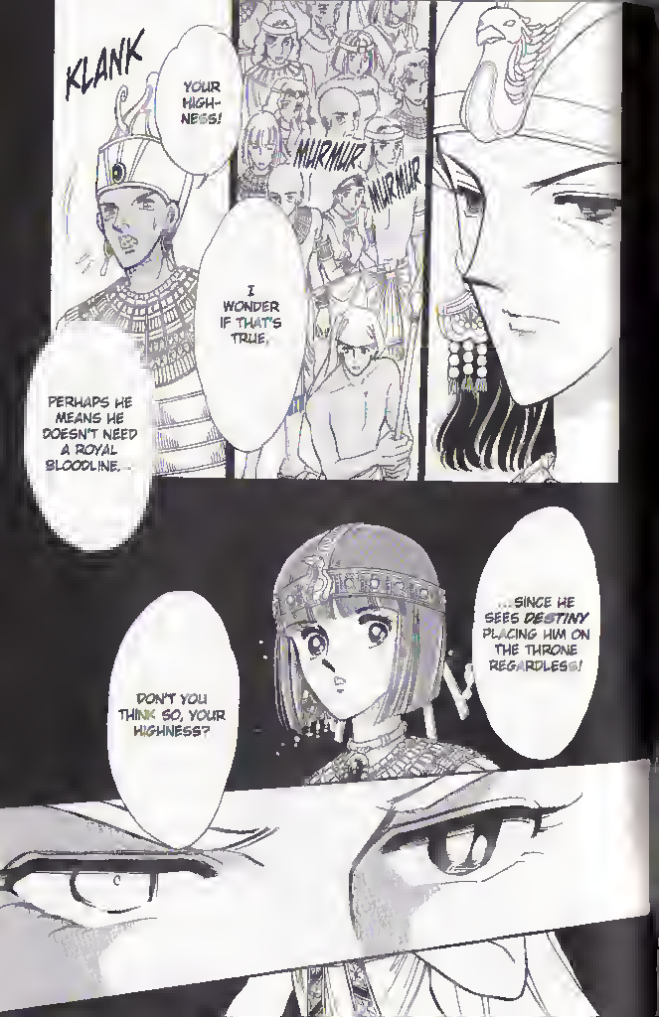

I AM EXTREMELY HONORED, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
HMM. HAVE WE MET BEFORE YOUNG LADY?
OMIGOSH! WE DID, IN EMESA!
HE KNOWS I'M KAIL'S CONCUBINE!

GLARE
BEGGING YOUR PARDON, YOUR EXCEL-LENCY
UM... NO, I WAS JUST... DISTRACTED.
...BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU'RE FLIRTING WITH MY FIANCÉE.
HER NAME IS NAP-TERA...
...YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.
I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS!
MY NAME...?
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, MY DEAR?
I SEE
NAPTERA, EH?


OR NEFERTARI, WHEN PRONOUNCED THE EGYPTIAN WAY
IT MEANS "MOST BEAUTIFUL ONE" OR "BEST ONE."
IS THIS WOMAN INDEED THE BEST FOR YOU, GENERAL RAMSES?
IT'S HER— QUEEN NEFERTITI!

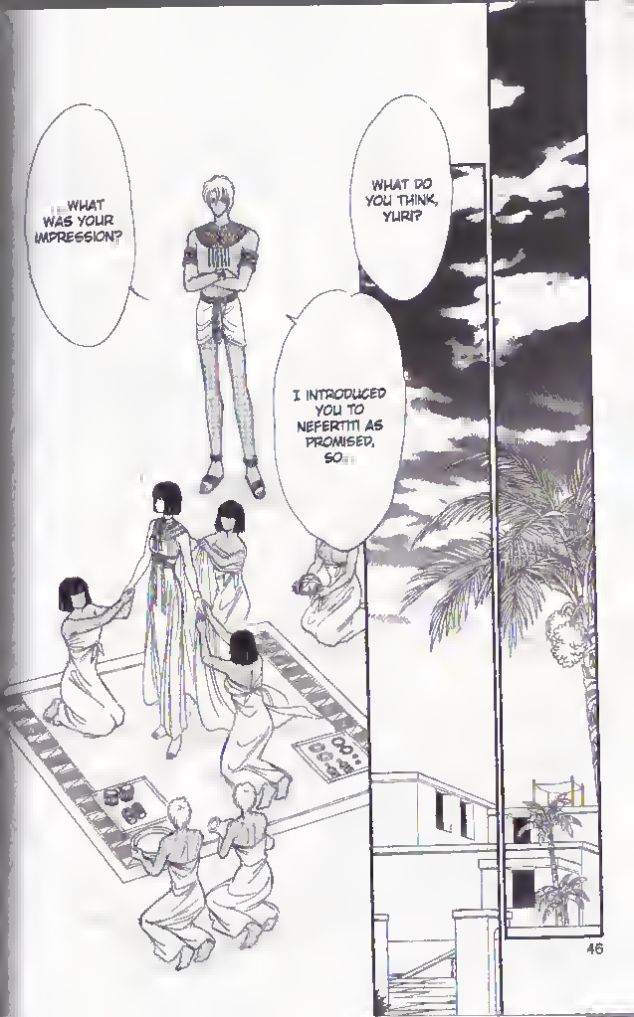

YOU GET TO THE GIST OF IT, YOUR HIGHNESS
INDEED, SHE IS THE BEST I COULD EVER HOPE FOR.
...SHE'S AN ELDER SISTER OF PRINCE MATTIWAZA, WHO GAVE ME THIS NECKLACE.
A FORMER PRINCESS OF MITANNI.
PHEW! IT'S A SMALL WORLD!

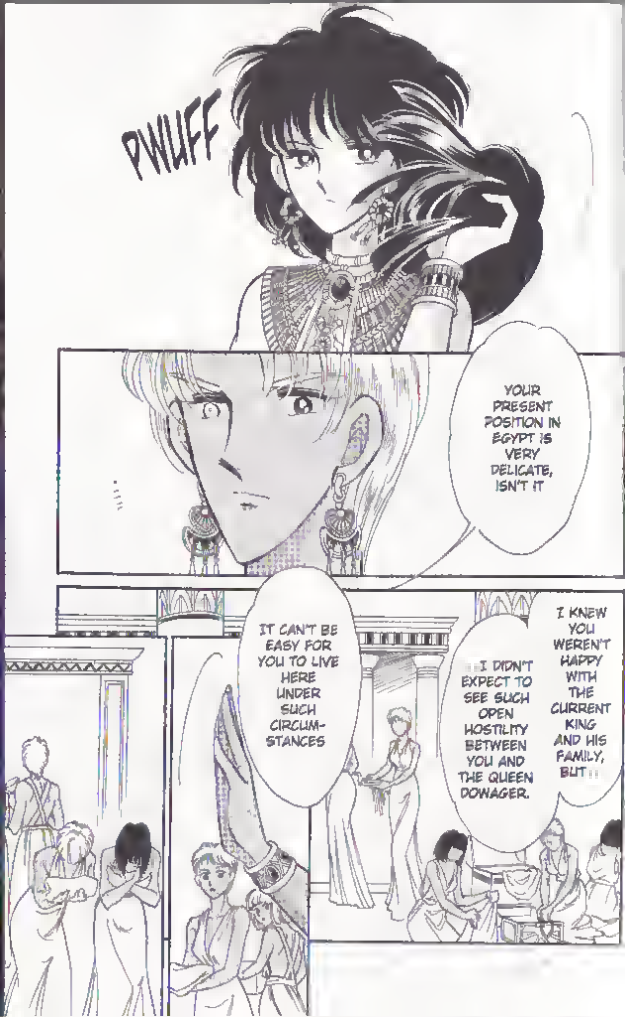
HMM...
I'D HAVE THOUGHT YOU'D CHOSEN HER...
...BECAUSE YOU SAW HER AS MOST SUITABLE TO BE A QUEEN OF EGYPT.
HA HA HA...VERY AMUSING, YOUR HIGHNESS.
I'VE OFFERED YOU ANY ONE OF MY SIX DAUGHTERS FOR A BRIDE, BUT YOU'VE NEVER ACCEPTED
YOU DON'T LIKE MY DAUGHTERS...
...RAMSES?
YOUR HIGHNESS..
I DECLINED ONLY BECAUSE I DID NOT WANT TO SUGGEST I HAD AMBITIONS TO BECOME KING

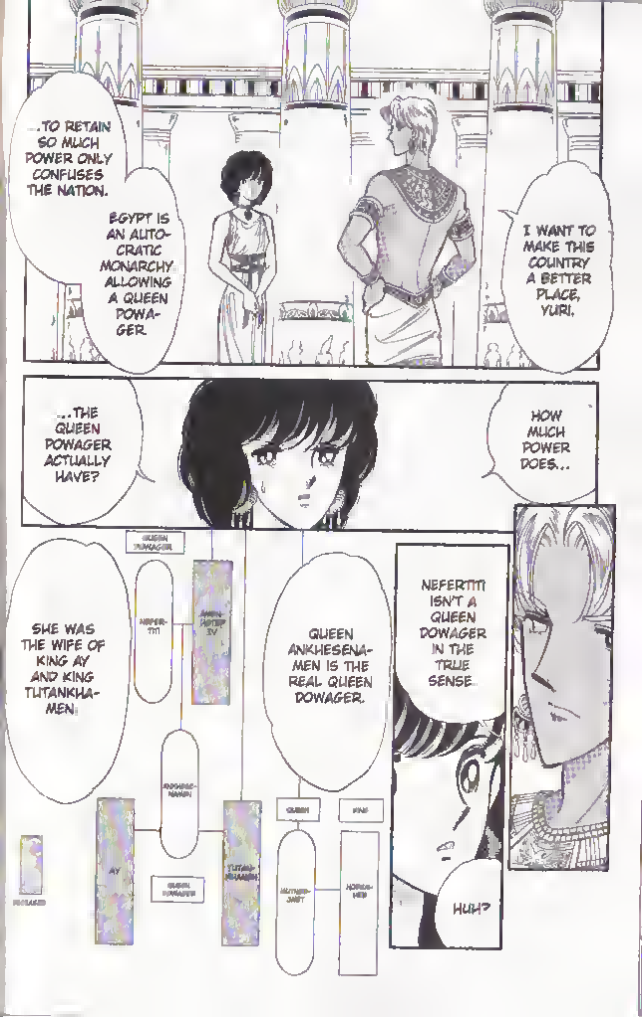

KLANK
YOUR HIGH-NESS!
MURMUR
MURMUR
I WONDER IF THAT'S TRUE.
PERHAPS HE MEANS HE DOESN'T NEED A ROYAL BLOODLINE...
...SINCE HE SEES DESTINY PLACING HIM ON THE THRONE REGARDLESS!
DON'T YOU THINK SO, YOUR HIGHNESS?

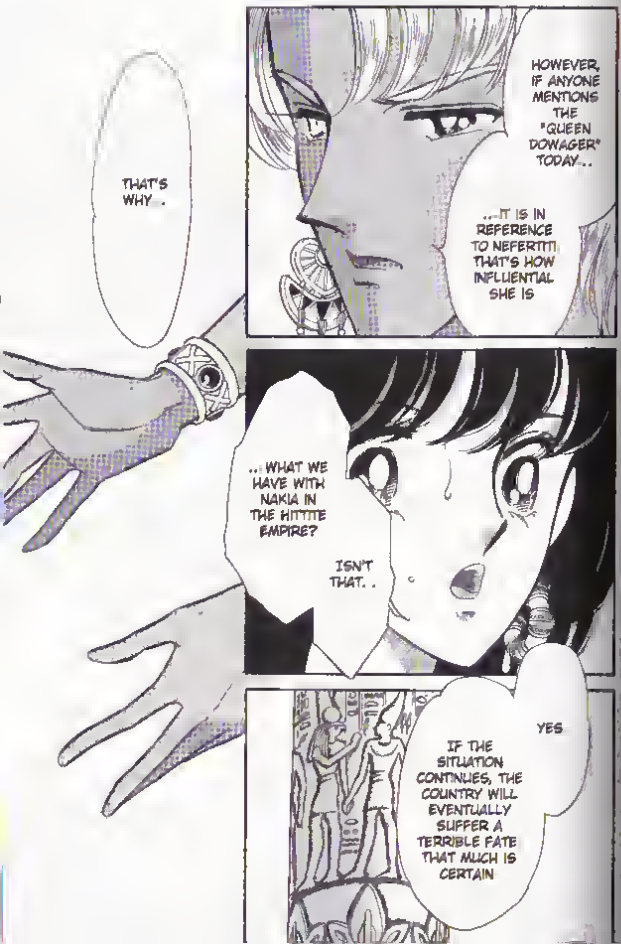
HU SH
YOU THINK I HOPE TO BECOME KING OF EGYPT?
HA HA HA HA HA!
AND THAT I CHOSE THIS WOMAN BECAUSE SHE'LL MAKE A GREAT QUEEN?
HA HA HA HA!

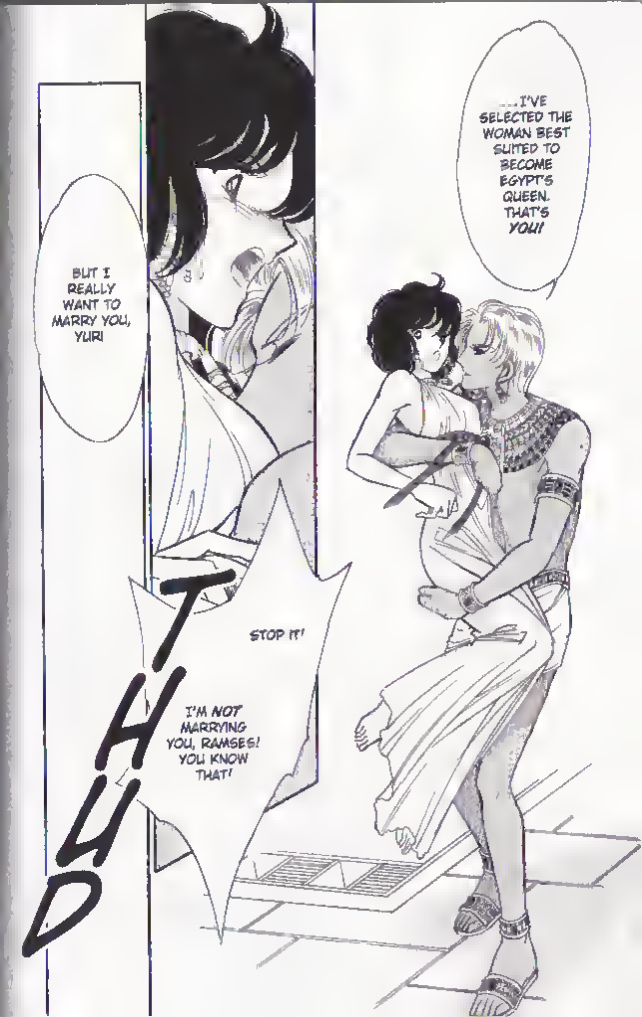
SLAP
ARE YOU CRAZY?!
HOW DARE YOU DO THAT IN PUBLIC!
SQUEEZE
I HUMBLY REQUEST YOUR HONORABLE PRESENCE
WE WILL WED IN TEN DAYS
I LOVE HER DEARLY
SEE? SHE'S FIERY, BUT...

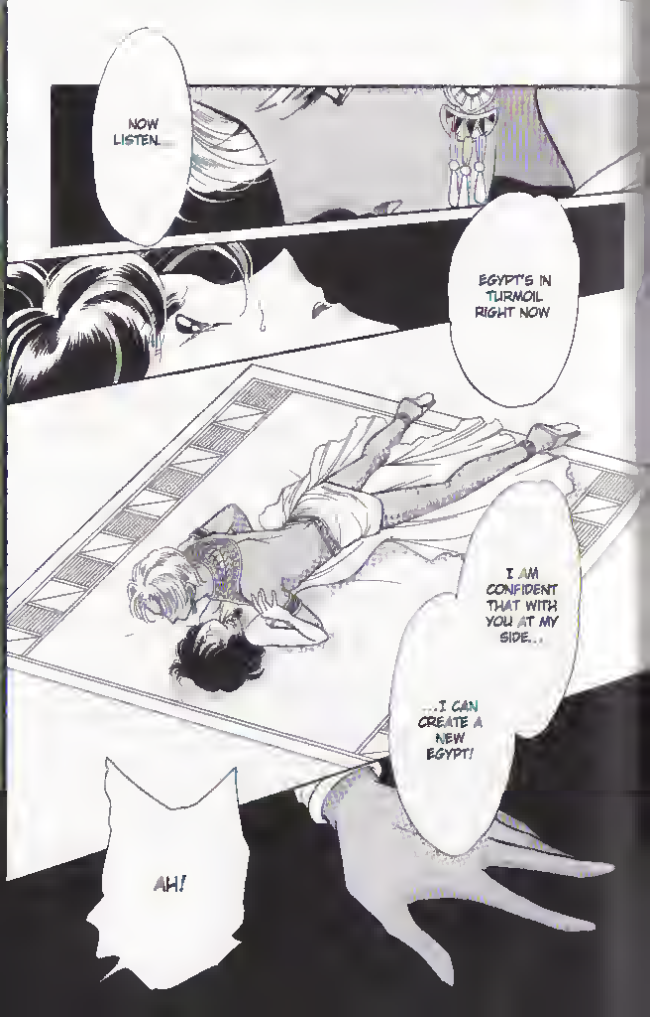

WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION?
WHAT DO YOU THINK, YURI?
I INTRODUCED YOU TO NEFERTITI AS PROMISED, SO...

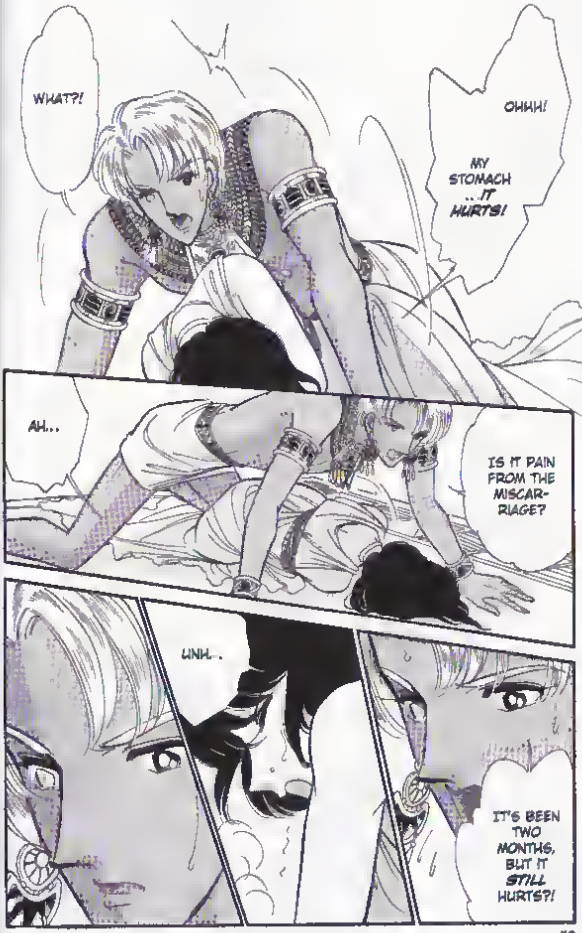

PWUFF
YOUR PRESENT POSITION IN EGYPT IS VERY DELICATE, ISN'T IT
I KNEW YOU WEREN'T HAPPY WITH THE CURRENT KING AND HIS FAMILY, BUT...
...I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE SUCH OPEN HOSTILITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE QUEEN DOWAGER.
IT CAN'T BE EASY FOR YOU TO LIVE HERE UNDER SUCH CIRCUM-STANCES


...TO RETAIN SO MUCH POWER ONLY CONFUSES THE NATION.
EGYPT IS AN AUTOCRATIC MONARCHY ALLOWING A QUEEN DOWAGER.
I WANT TO MAKE THIS COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE, YURI.
...THE QUEEN DOWAGER ACTUALLY HAVE?
HOW MUCH POWER DOES...
SHE WAS THE WIFE OF KING AY AND KING TUTANKHAMEN.
QUEEN DOWAGER
NEFERTITI
AMENHOTEP IV
AY
TUTANKHAMEN
QUEEN DOWAGER
QUEEN ANKHESENAMEN IS THE REAL QUEEN DOWAGER.
QUEEN
KING
NEFERTITI ISN'T A QUEEN DOWAGER IN THE TRUE SENSE.
HUH?

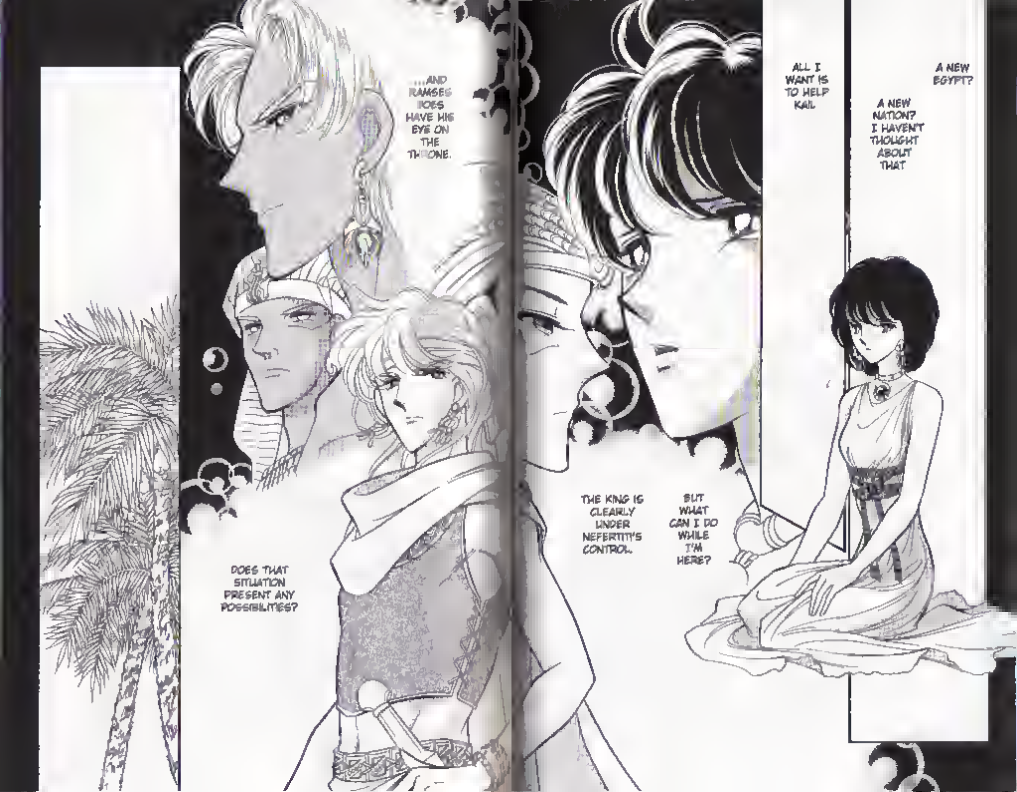

HOWEVER, IF ANYONE MENTIONS THE "QUEEN DOWAGER" TODAY...
...IT IS IN REFERENCE TO NEFERTITI. THAT'S HOW INFLUENTIAL SHE IS
THAT'S WHY...
...WHAT WE HAVE WITH NAKIA IN THE HITTITE EMPIRE?
ISN'T THAT...
YES
IF THE SITUATION CONTINUES, THE COUNTRY WILL EVENTUALLY SUFFER A TERRIBLE FATE THAT MUCH IS CERTAIN


BUT I REALLY WANT TO MARRY YOU, YURI
THUD
STOP IT!
I'M NOT MARRYING YOU, RAMSES! YOU KNOW THAT!
...I'VE SELECTED THE WOMAN BEST SUITED TO BECOME EGYPT'S QUEEN. THAT'S YOU!


NOW LISTEN...
EGYPT'S IN TURMOIL RIGHT NOW
I AM CONFIDENT THAT WITH YOU AT MY SIDE...
...I CAN CREATE A NEW EGYPT!
AH!


WHAT?!
OHHH!
MY STOMACH ...IT HURTS!
AH...
IS IT PAIN FROM THE MISCAR-RIAGE?
UNH..
IT'S BEEN TWO MONTHS, BUT IT STILL HURTS?!

SOME-
BODY!
WE NEED
HELP!
SOME-
BODY!
CALL A
DOCTOR!
BRING
MEDICINE!
Pbbt

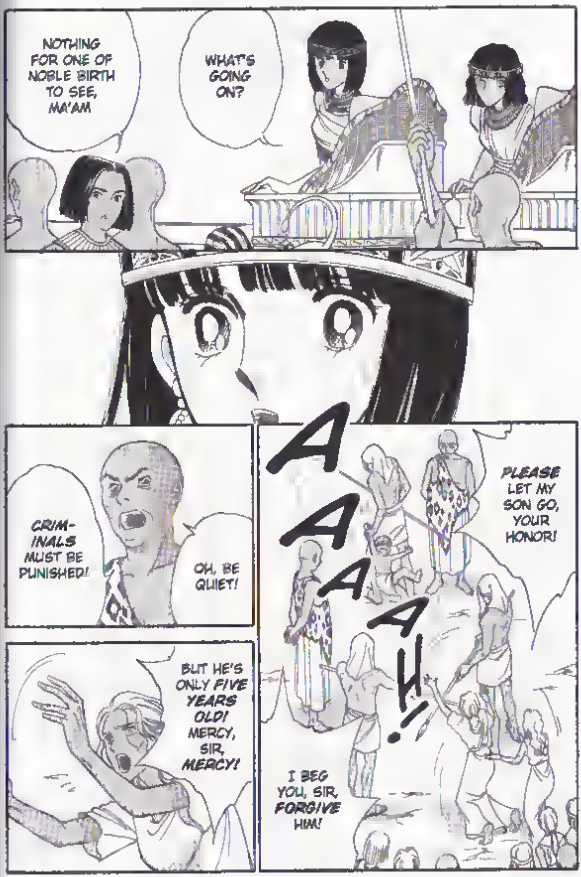

...AND RAMSES DOES HAVE HIS EYE ON THE THRONE.
DOES THAT SITUATION PRESENT ANY POSSIBILITIES?
THE KING IS CLEARLY UNDER NEFERTITI'S CONTROL.
BUT WHAT CAN I DO WHILE I'M HERE?
ALL I WANT IS TO HELP KAIL
A NEW NATION? I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT THAT
A NEW EGYPT?

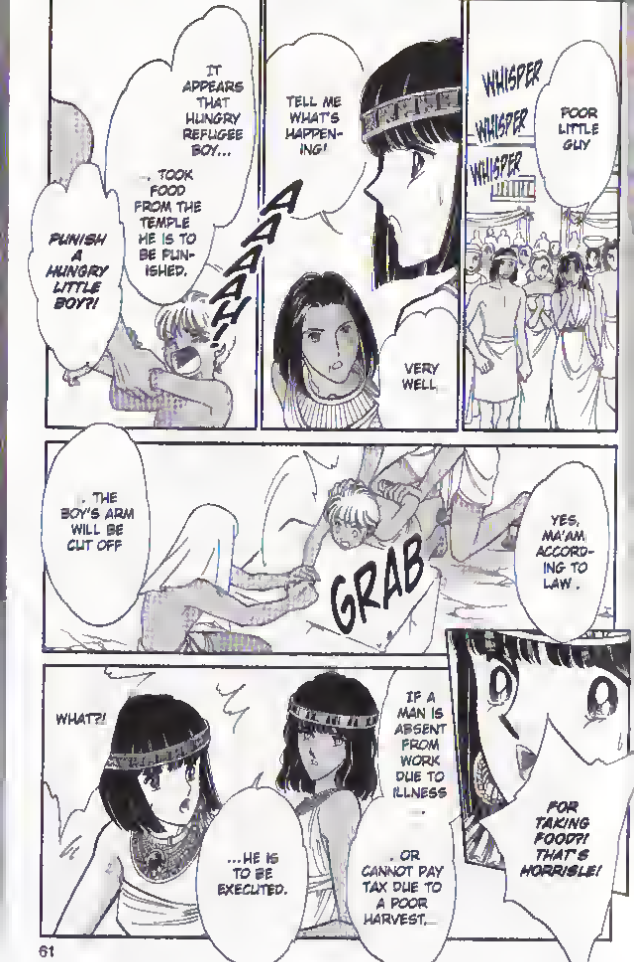
THERE'S MUCH TO BE DONE.
BEFORE THE WEDDING. TO THE FIRST—
WAS I GREETING THE ROYAL FAMILY YOU DID THAT YESTERDAY.
THERE'S MORE?!
NEXT YOU MUST VISIT THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS.
AND THEN YOU MUST OFFER PRAYERS AT EACH TEMPLE AND...
I SAID YOU'D BE VERY BUSY FOR THE NEXT TEN DAYS.
WEREN'T YOU LISTENING?
I WASN'T, SINCE I COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT THE WEDDING CEREMONY

LET'S FIRST VISIT THE TEMPLE OF...
.. OUR MOTHER GODDESS ISIS.
IT'S SO LIVELY IN THE CAPITAL. I LOVE IT!
WHEW! GOTTA REMEMBER THIS ERA.
ALL THIS WAS ENTIRELY BUILT BY HAND?
IT'S AMAZING
YOU SPEAK AS IF YOU FIND THAT STRANGE.
LOOK!
IT'S ALL HERE.. EXOTIC WARES IN THE SHOPS, ENTERTAINERS ON THE STREETS...

AH! I SEE THE MERCHANTS FROM PUNT
THEY'RE KNOWN EVERYWHERE FOR THEIR BEAUTIFUL GEMS.
WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE?
NEFERT ..
OH, THEY'RE REFUGEES FROM THE COUNTRY-SIDE
THE HARVEST HAS BEEN POOR IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, AND MANY FARMERS HAVE MIGRATED TO THE CAPITAL

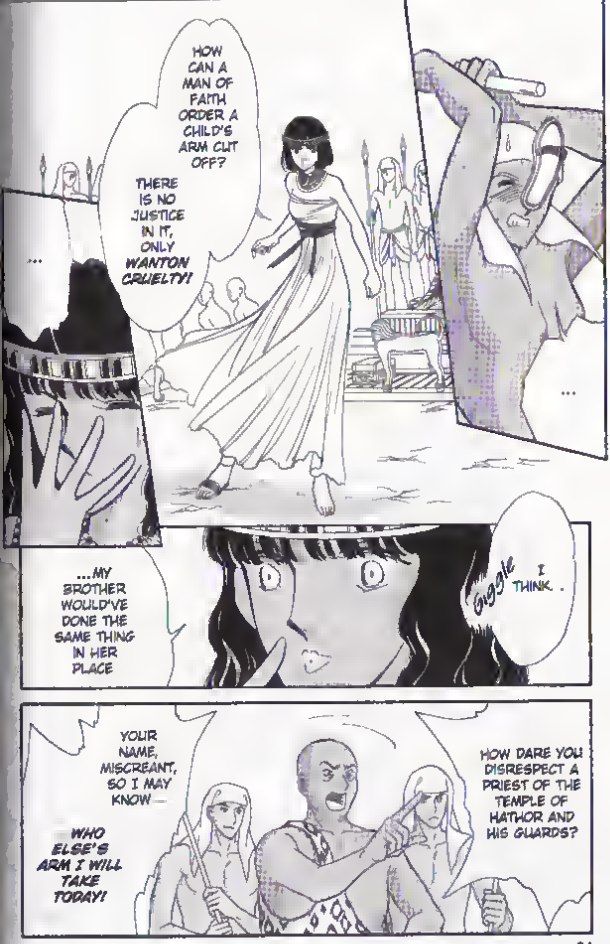
EGYPT'S FARMS. . FAILING .
A BRUTAL PORTENT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISASTER.
RAMSES IS RIGHT, EGYPT'S IN PRETTY BAD SHAPE
UNFORTUNATELY, THEY CAN'T FIND JOBS OR FOOD HERE EITHER.
EVEN SO, THEBES IS ATTRACTING MORE AND MORE PEOPLE LIKE THEM.
AAAH! EEEE!


NOTHING FOR ONE OF NOBLE BIRTH TO SEE, MA'AM
WHAT'S GOING ON?
AAAAH!
CRIM-INALS MUST BE PUNISHED!
OH, BE QUIET!
PLEASE LET MY SON GO, YOUR HONOR!
BUT HE'S ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD! MERCY, SIR, MERCY!
I BEG YOU, SIR, FORGIVE HIM!

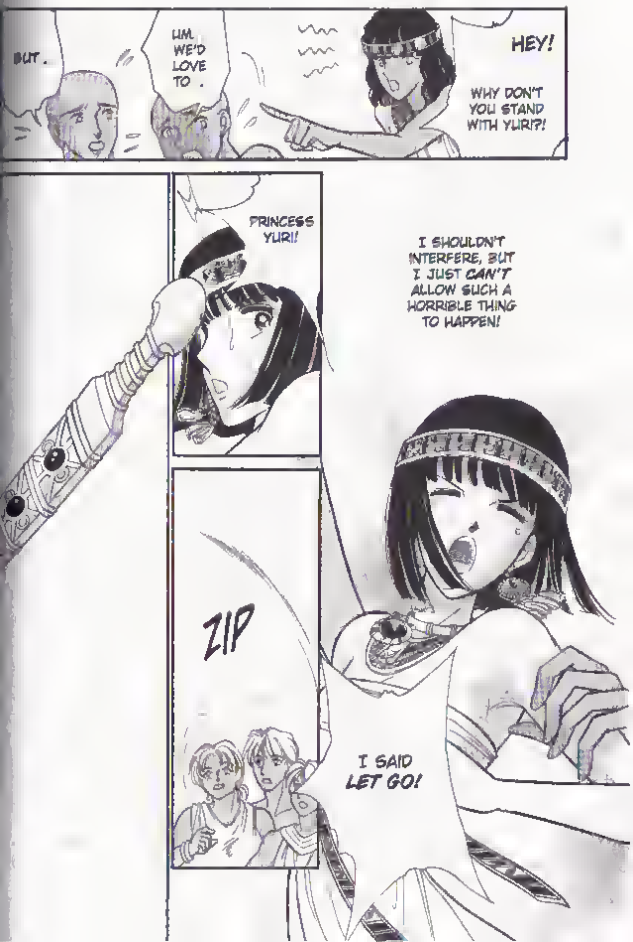

IT APPEARS THAT HUNGRY REFUGEE BOY...
. TOOK FOOD FROM THE TEMPLE HE IS TO BE PUNISHED.
PUNISH A HUNGRY LITTLE BOY?!
TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENING!
AAAAH!
VERY WELL
WHISPER WHISPER WHISPER
POOR LITTLE GUY
. THE BOY'S ARM WILL BE CUT OFF
GRAB
YES, MA'AM. ACCORDING TO LAW .
WHAT?!
...HE IS TO BE EXECUTED.
IF A MAN IS ABSENT FROM WORK DUE TO ILLNESS .
. OR CANNOT PAY TAX DUE TO A POOR HARVEST...
FOR TAKING FOOD?! THAT'S HORRIBLE!

AAAAH!
NO! PLEASE, NO! MERCY!
HOLD HIM DOWN
YEAH? SO?
WAIT, YURI! THAT MAN... ...IS A PRIEST OF THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR!
THAT TEMPLE HAS A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH NEFERTITI!
EEEE!
TAKE THE ARM! NOW!
...WILL PUT HIM IN A VERY DIFFICULT POSITION
AS MY BROTHER'S FIANCÉE, COMING INTO CONFLICT WITH IT...

WAAAH!
WHUP
DON'T!
WHACK

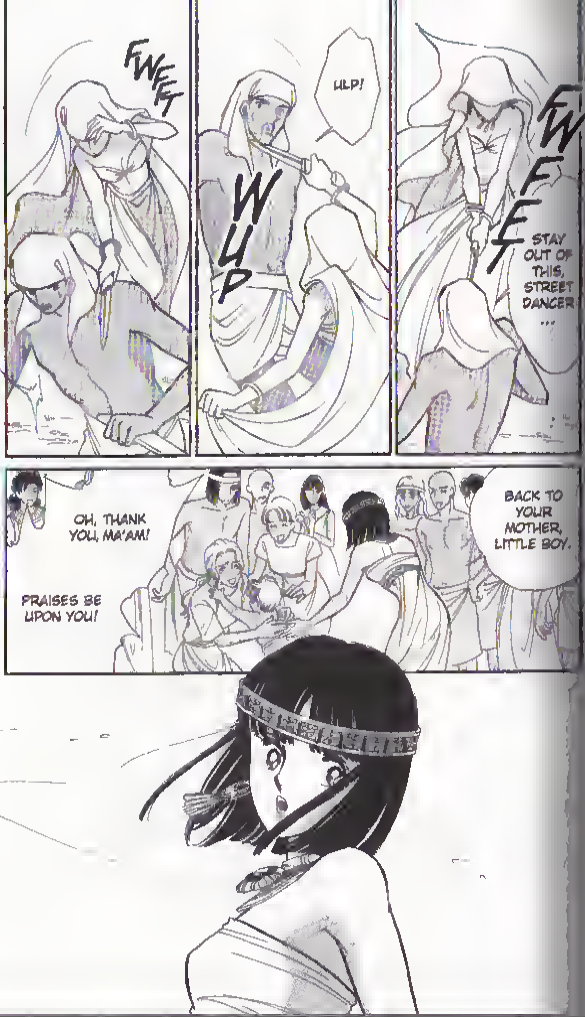

HOW CAN A MAN OF FAITH ORDER A CHILD'S ARM CUT OFF?
THERE IS NO JUSTICE IN IT, ONLY WANTON CRUELTY!
...
...
...MY BROTHER WOULD'VE DONE THE SAME THING IN HER PLACE
Gggle
I THINK.
YOUR NAME, MISCREANT, SO I MAY KNOW—
WHO ELSE'S ARM I WILL TAKE TODAY!
HOW DARE YOU DISRESPECT A PRIEST OF THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR AND HIS GUARDS?

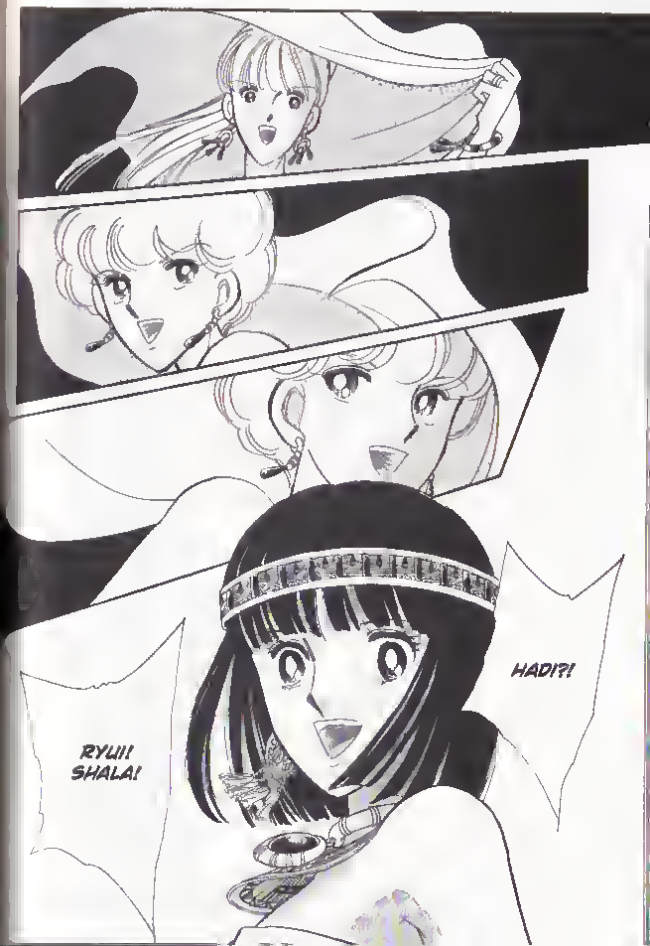
PSST
PSST
SIR, THAT WOMAN IS THE...
WHAT? GENERAL RAMSES' FIANCÉE ?!
THAT MAN WHO READILY OPPOSES HER HIGHNESS?
PRINCESS, PLEASE DO NOT INTERFERE.
A THIEF IS A THIEF, WHATEVER HIS AGE, AND THE LAW'S THE LAW.
ISN'T THERE ANOTHER WAY?
CUTTING OFF HIS ARM IS TERRIBLY CRUEL!
THAT'S WHY IT'S SO EFFECTIVE
WOMEN DON'T UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS.
GRAB
LET GO OF ME!
PLEASE LEAVE THIS TO US, MA'AM.

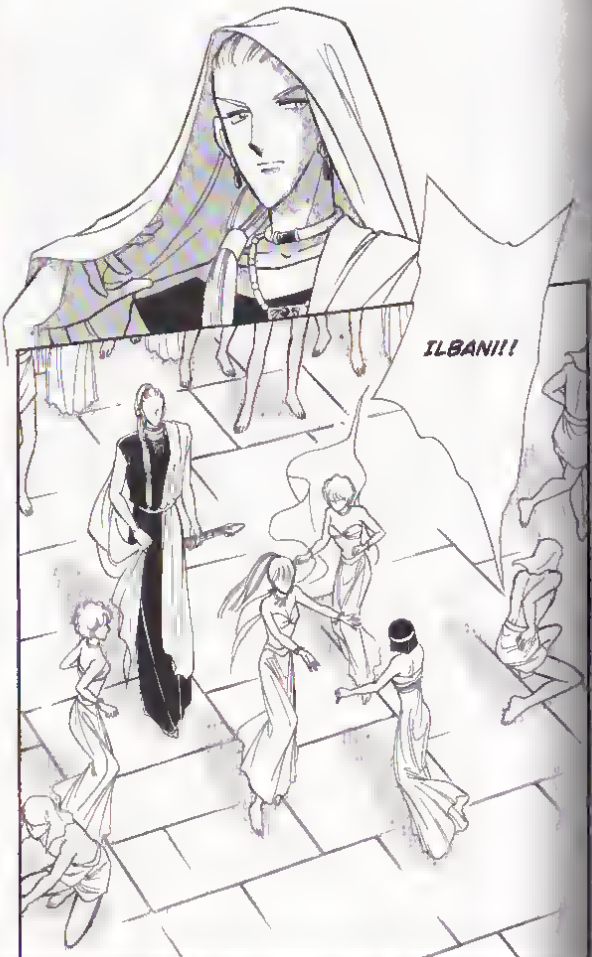

BUT.
UM, WE'D LOVE TO.
HEY!
WHY DON'T YOU STAND WITH YURI?!
PRINCESS YURI!
I SHOULDN'T INTERFERE, BUT I JUST CAN'T ALLOW SUCH A HORRIBLE THING TO HAPPEN!
ZIP
I SAID LET GO!

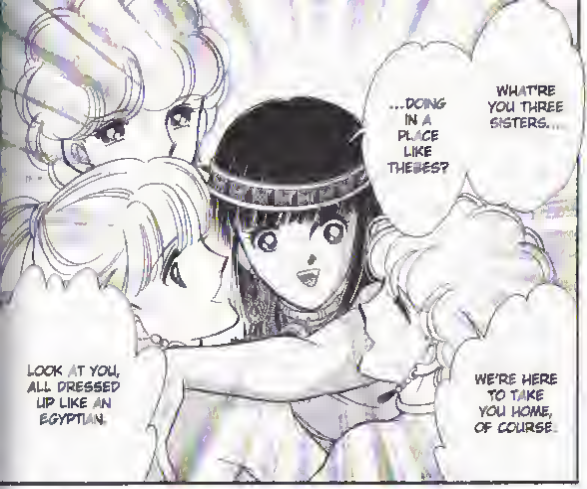
!!
WHIIIING
WHAT IN THE WORLD —?
SHE HAS A WEAPON!

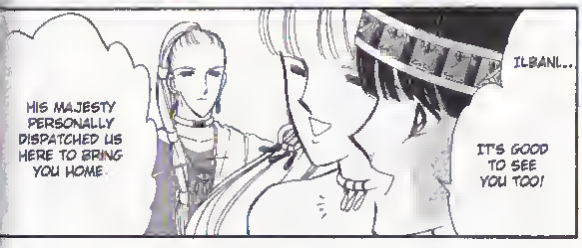
HOW DARE...!
GLOM
CA... CAPTURE HER!
COME WITH ME, LITTLE BOY!

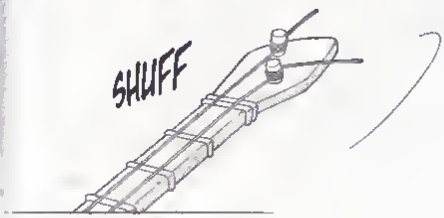

FWEFT
WUP
ULP!
FWFF
STAY OUT OF THIS, STREET DANCER ...
BACK TO YOUR MOTHER, LITTLE BOY.
OH, THANK YOU, MA'AM!
PRAISES BE UPON YOU!

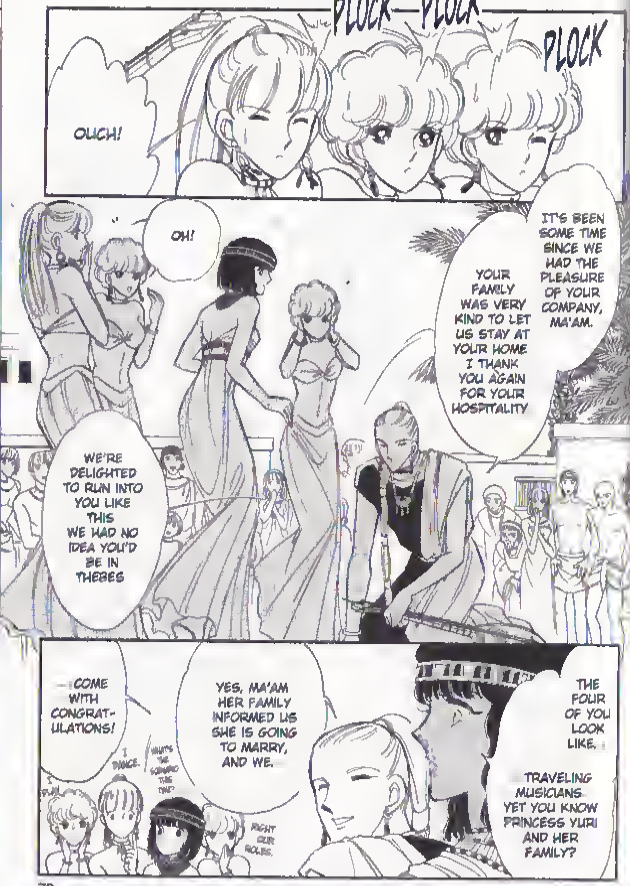

HADI?!
RYUII SHALA!

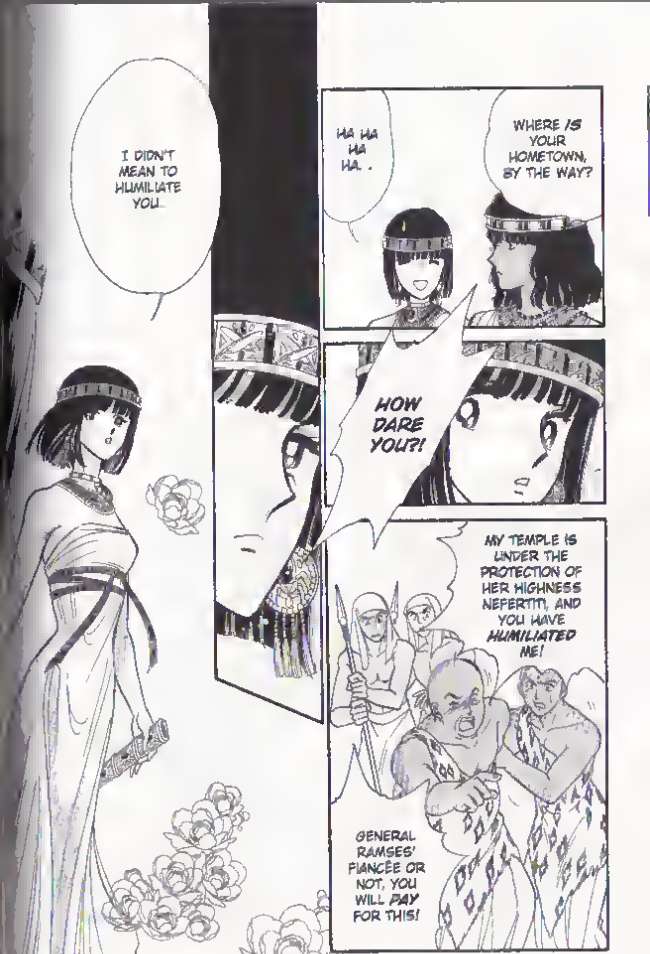

ILBANI!!

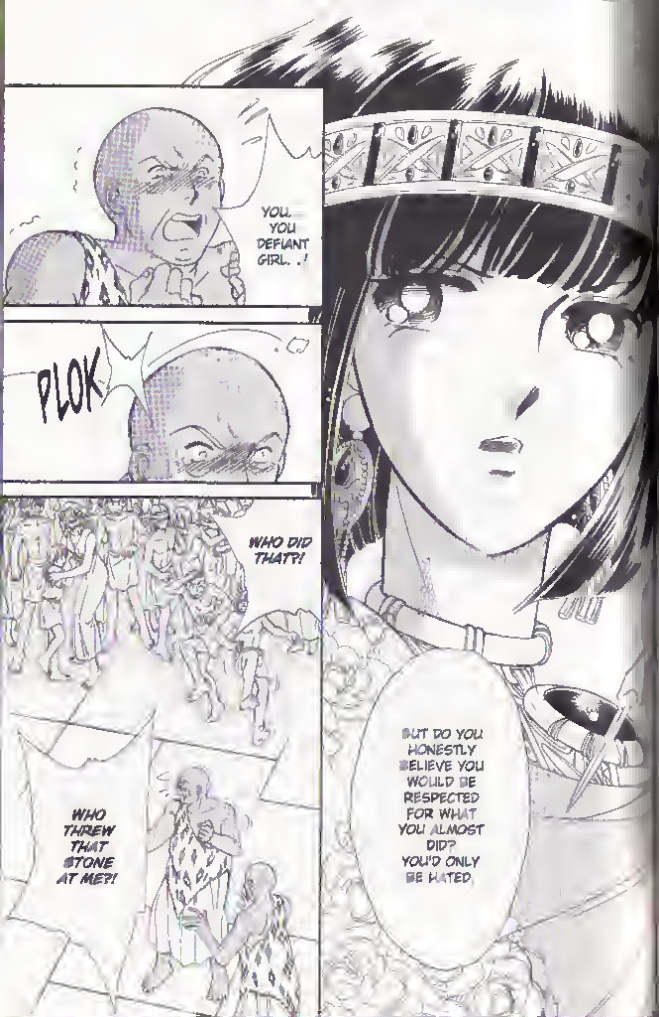

WHAT'RE YOU THREE SISTERS...
...DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THEBES?
LOOK AT YOU, ALL DRESSED UP LIKE AN EGYPTIAN.
WE'RE HERE TO TAKE YOU HOME, OF COURSE.


ILBANI...
HIS MAJESTY PERSONALLY DISPATCHED US HERE TO BRING YOU HOME.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO!

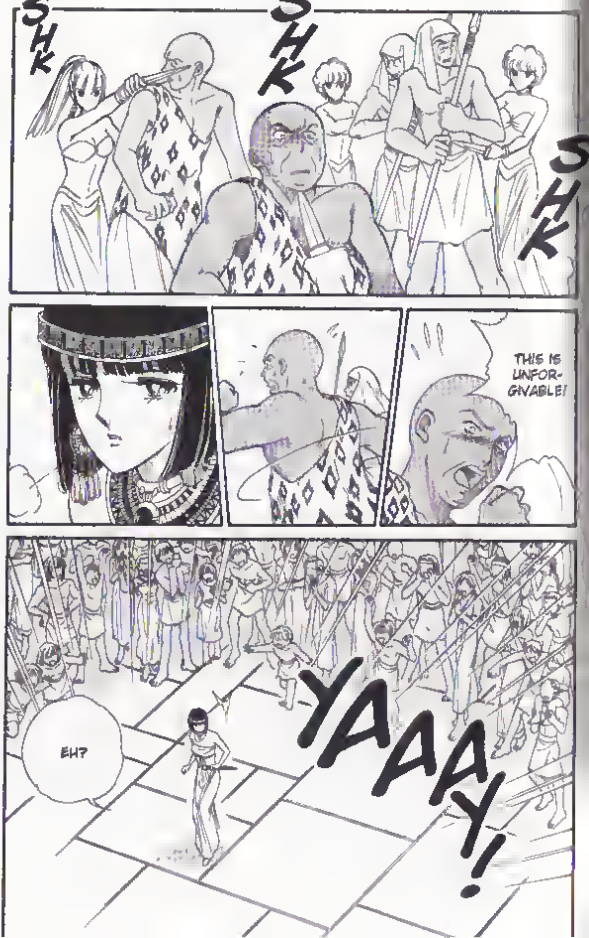

SHUFF


PLOCK—PLOCK—PLOCK
OUCH!
OH!
IT'S BEEN SOME TIME SINCE WE HAD THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY, MA'AM.
YOUR FAMILY WAS VERY KIND TO LET US STAY AT YOUR HOME I THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY
WE'RE DELIGHTED TO RUN INTO YOU LIKE THIS WE HAD NO IDEA YOU'D BE IN THEBES
—COME WITH CONGRAT-ULATIONS!
I DANCE.
WHAT'S THE COMMOTION THE TWO?
RIGHT OUR ROLES.
YES, MA'AM HER FAMILY INFORMED US SHE IS GOING TO MARRY, AND WE.
THE FOUR OF YOU LOOK LIKE.
TRAVELING MUSICIANS. YET YOU KNOW PRINCESS YURI AND HER FAMILY?

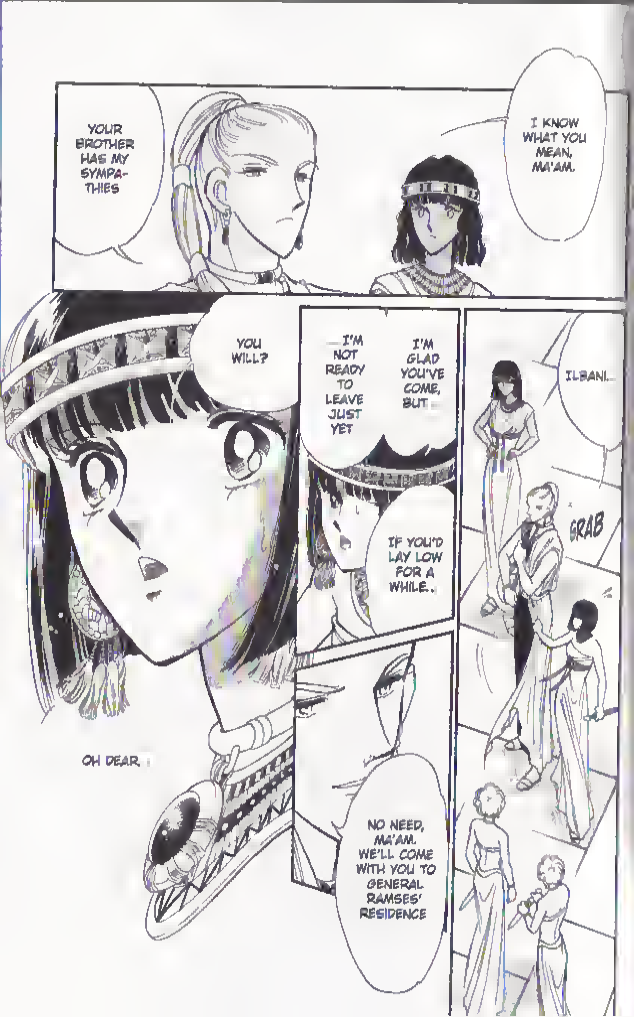

I DIDN'T MEAN TO HUMILIATE YOU...
HA HA HA HA..
WHERE IS YOUR HOMETOWN, BY THE WAY?
HOW DARE YOU?!
MY TEMPLE IS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF HER HIGHNESS NEFERTITI, AND YOU HAVE HUMILIATED ME!
GENERAL RAMSES' FIANCÉE OR NOT, YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS!

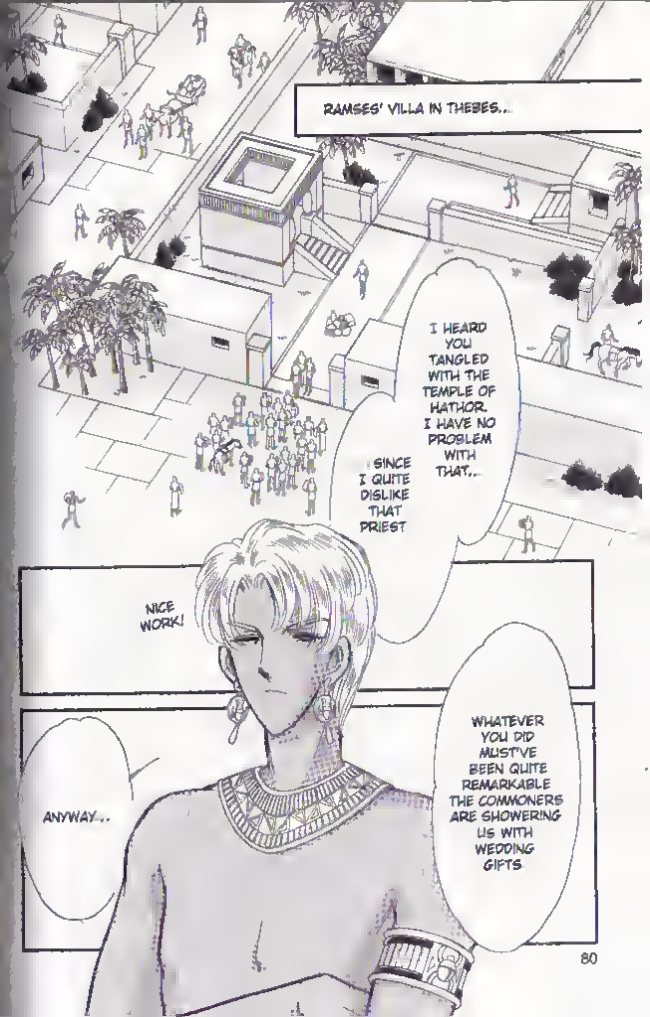

YOU... YOU DEFIANT GIRL..!
PLOK
WHO DID THAT?
WHO THREW THAT STONE AT ME?!
BUT DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE YOU WOULD BE RESPECTED FOR WHAT YOU ALMOST DID? YOU'D ONLY BE HATED.

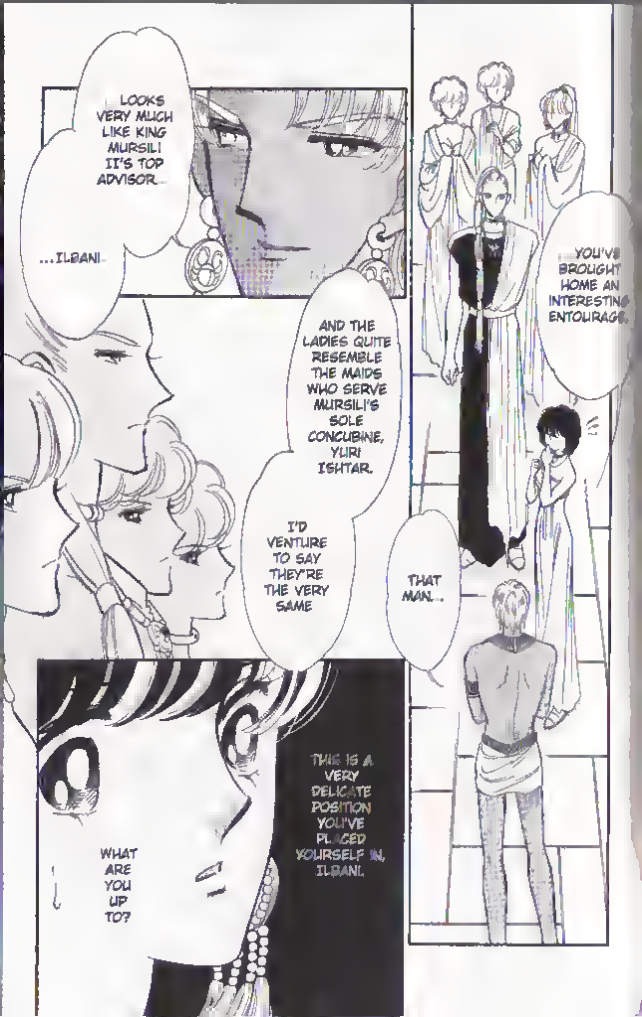
DID YOU DO IT?!
IF NOT, TELL ME WHO DID OR I'LL TAKE YOUR ARM!
THAT'S NOT FAIR, SIR!
HUSH
I'M ASKING WHO DID IT! ANSWER ME!
LEAVE HIM ALONE...
...IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE
...FEEL MY BLADE?
OR WOULD YOU RATHER..

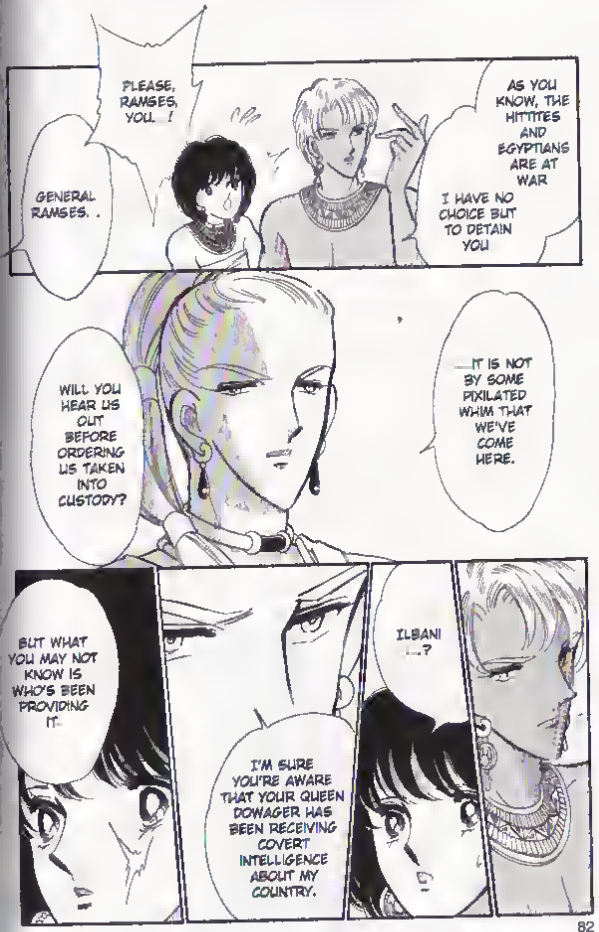

SHK
SHK
SHK
THIS IS UNFOR-GIVABLE!
EH?
YAAA!

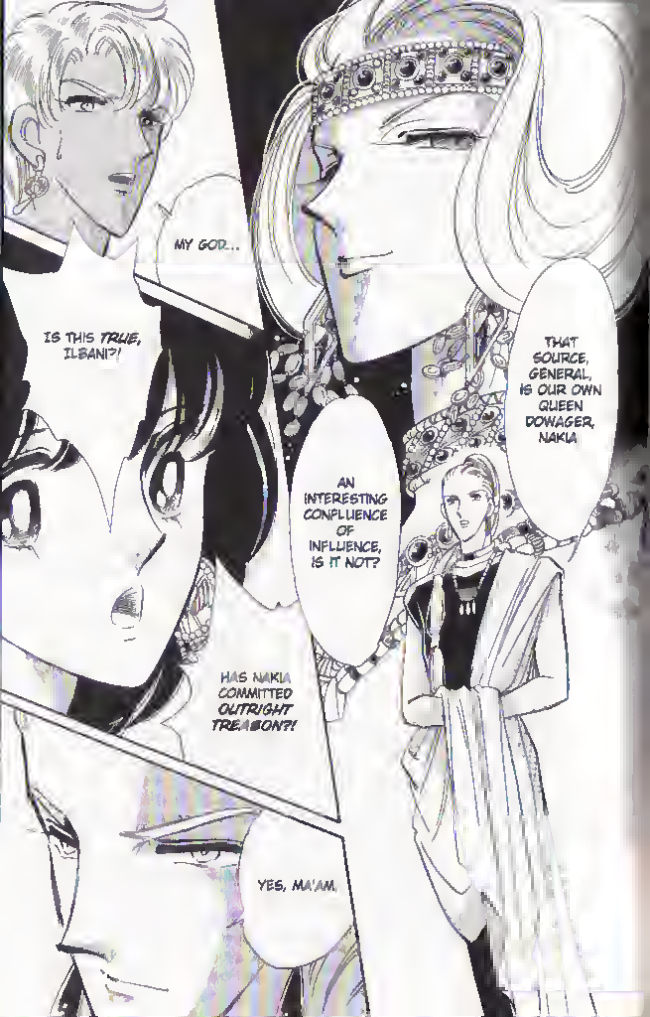
I SELL THESE, SO PLEASE ACCEPT THEM AS MY WEDDING GIFT.
CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ENGAGEMENT TO GENERAL RAMSES!
THANK YOU AGAIN, PRINCESS!
CHEER CHEER CHEER
SHE'S CONTRIBUTED MATERIALLY TO MY BROTHER'S POPULARITY...
AH, RAMSES, YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO PICK 'EM!
...BUT THIS WILL NOT SIT WELL WITH THE QUEEN DOWAGER AND HER LAPDOGS.

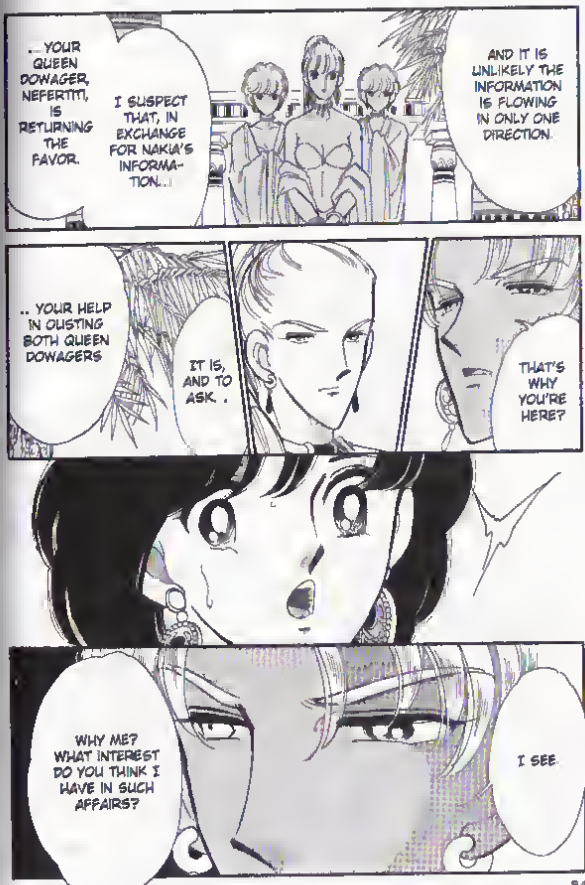

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, MA'AM.
YOUR BROTHER HAS MY SYMPA-THIES
I'M GLAD YOU'VE COME, BUT...
I'M NOT READY TO LEAVE JUST YET
IF YOU'D LAY LOW FOR A WHILE..
YOU WILL?
OH DEAR.
ILBANI...
GRAB
NO NEED, MA'AM. WE'LL COME WITH YOU TO GENERAL RAMSES' RESIDENCE

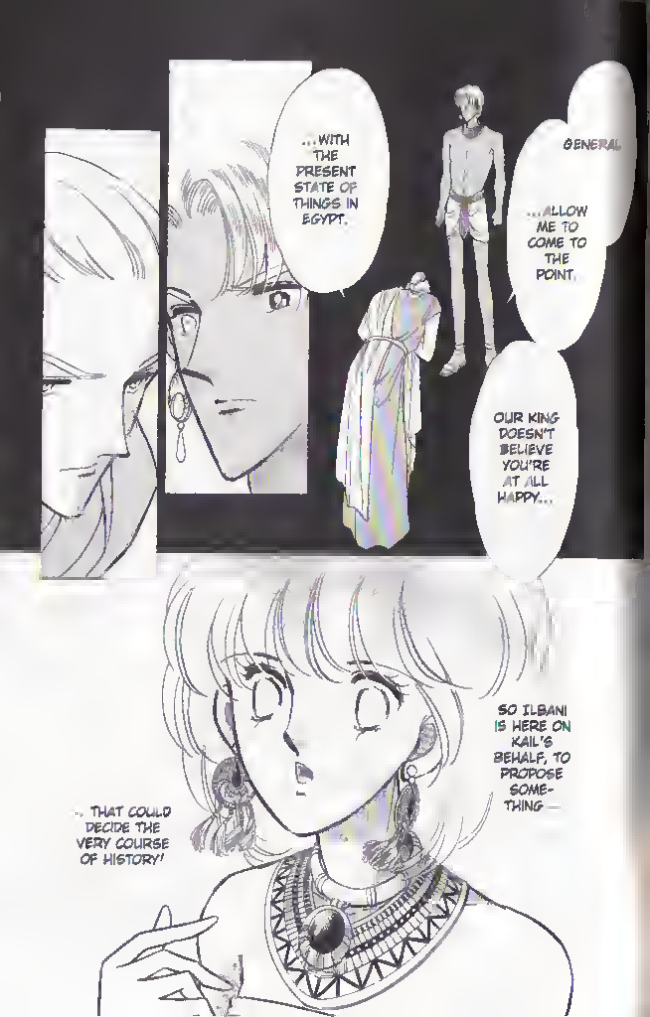

RAMSES' VILLA IN THEBES..
I HEARD YOU TANGLED WITH THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR. I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT..
SINCE I QUITE DISLIKE THAT PRIEST
NICE WORK!
WHATEVER YOU DID MUST'VE BEEN QUITE REMARKABLE THE COMMONERS ARE SHOWERING US WITH WEDDING GIFTS
ANYWAY...

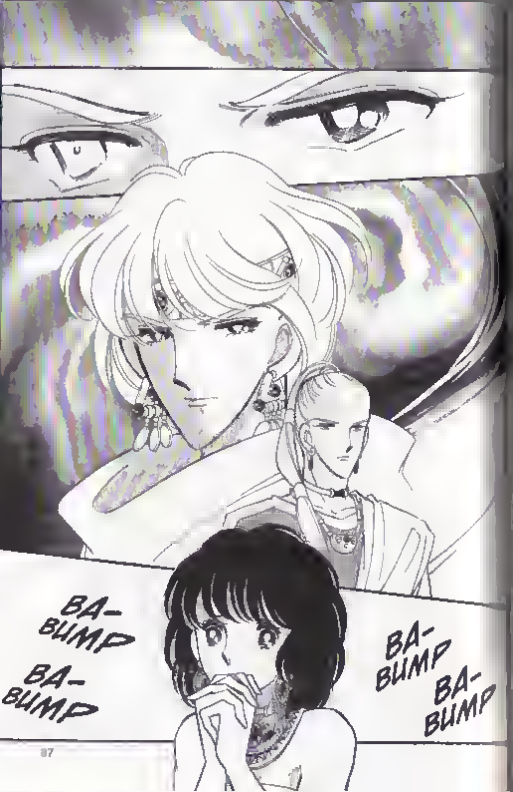

LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE KING MURSILI IT'S TOP ADVISOR...
...ILBANI...
AND THE LADIES QUITE RESEMBLE THE MAIDS WHO SERVE MURSILI'S SOLE CONCUBINE, YURI ISHTAR.
I'D VENTURE TO SAY THEY'RE THE VERY SAME
...YOU'VE BROUGHT HOME AN INTERESTING ENTOURAGE.
THAT MAN...
THIS IS A VERY DELICATE POSITION YOU'VE PLACED YOURSELF IN, ILBANI.
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?


PLEASE, RAMSES, YOU...!
GENERAL RAMSES...
AS YOU KNOW, THE HITTITES AND EGYPTIANS ARE AT WAR
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DETAIN YOU
WILL YOU HEAR US OUT BEFORE ORDERING US TAKEN INTO CUSTODY?
...IT IS NOT BY SOME PIXILATED WHIM THAT WE'VE COME HERE.
BUT WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW IS WHO'S BEEN PROVIDING IT...
I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE THAT YOUR QUEEN DOWAGER HAS BEEN RECEIVING COVERT INTELLIGENCE ABOUT MY COUNTRY.
ILBANI...?

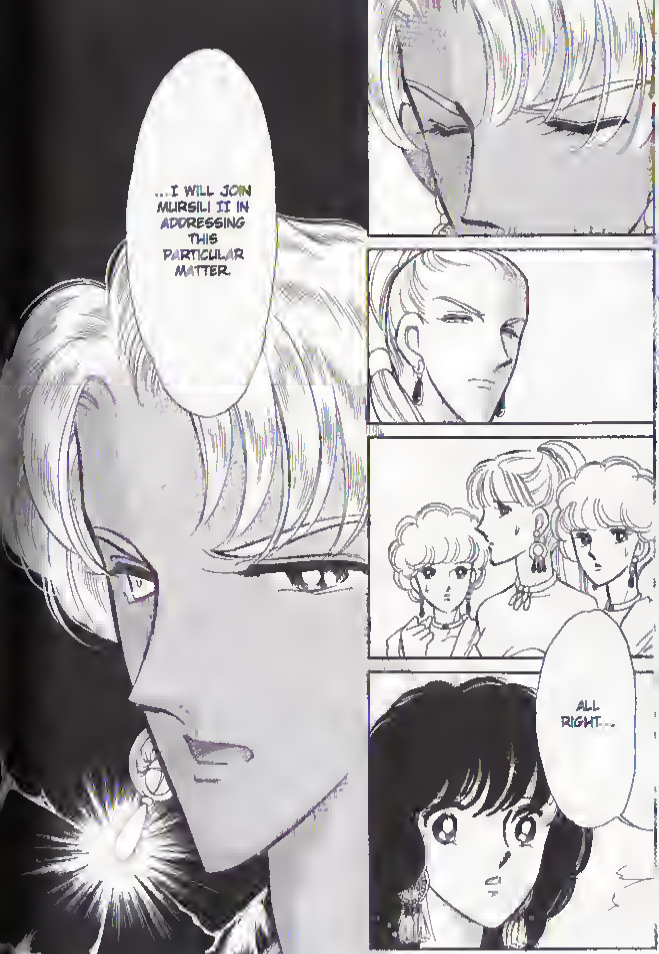

MY GOD...
IS THIS TRUE, ILBANI?!
THAT SOURCE, GENERAL, IS OUR OWN QUEEN DOWAGER, NAKIA
AN INTERESTING CONFLUENCE OF INFLUENCE, IS IT NOT?
HAS NAKIA COMMITTED OUTRIGHT TREASON?!
YES, MA'AM.

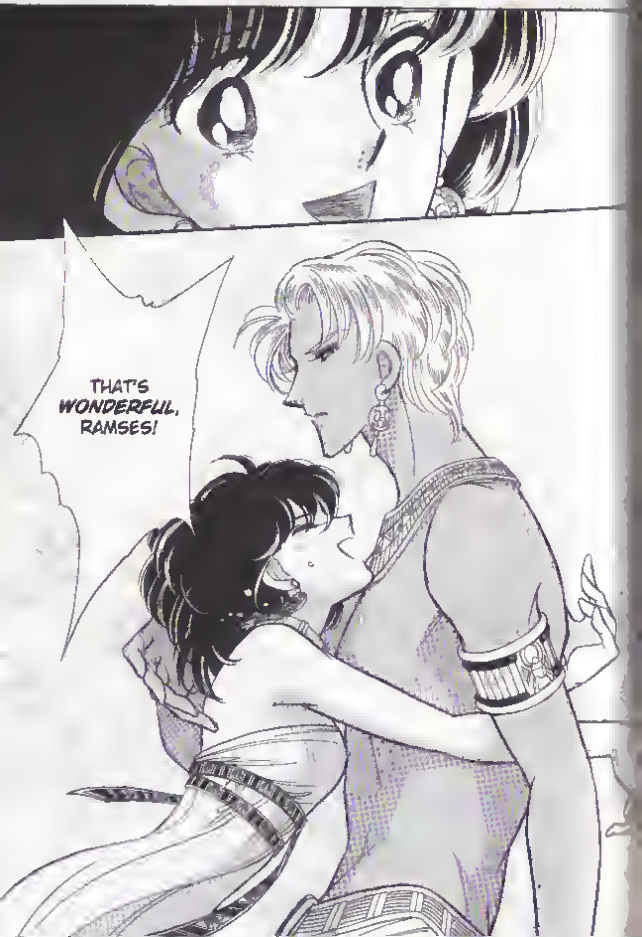

... YOUR QUEEN DOWAGER, NEFERTITI, IS RETURNING THE FAVOR.
I SUSPECT THAT, IN EXCHANGE FOR NAKIA'S INFORMATION...!
AND IT IS UNLIKELY THE INFORMATION IS FLOWING IN ONLY ONE DIRECTION.
.. YOUR HELP IN OUSTING BOTH QUEEN DOWAGERS
IT IS, AND TO ASK. .
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE?
WHY ME? WHAT INTEREST DO YOU THINK I HAVE IN SUCH AFFAIRS?
I SEE.

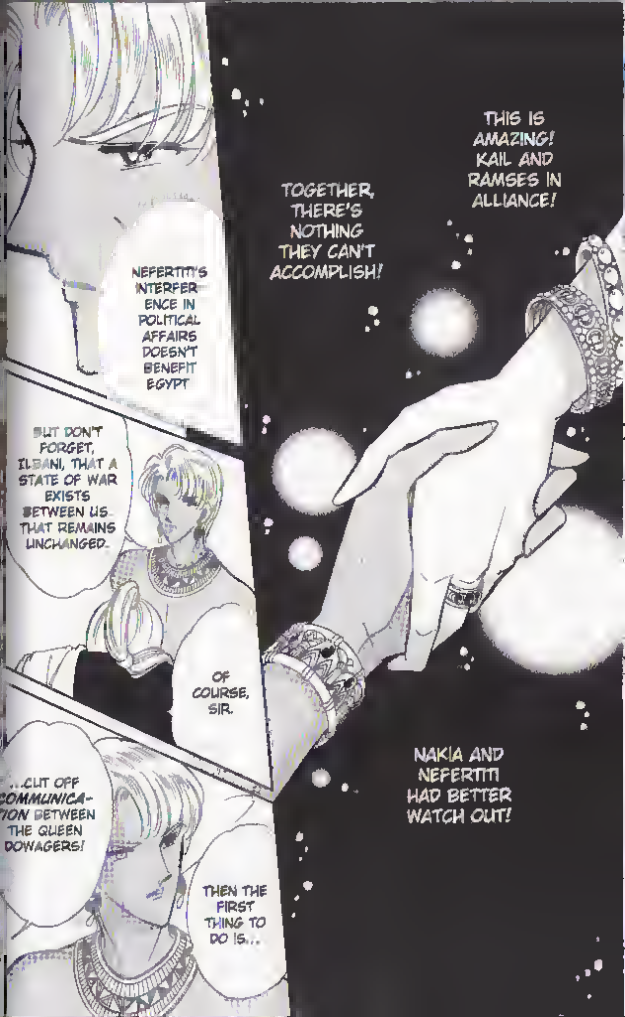

...WITH THE PRESENT STATE OF THINGS IN EGYPT.
GENERAL...
...ALLOW ME TO COME TO THE POINT.
OUR KING DOESN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE AT ALL HAPPY...
SO ILBANI IS HERE ON KAIL'S BEHALF, TO PROPOSE SOME-THING—
...THAT COULD DECIDE THE VERY COURSE OF HISTORY!

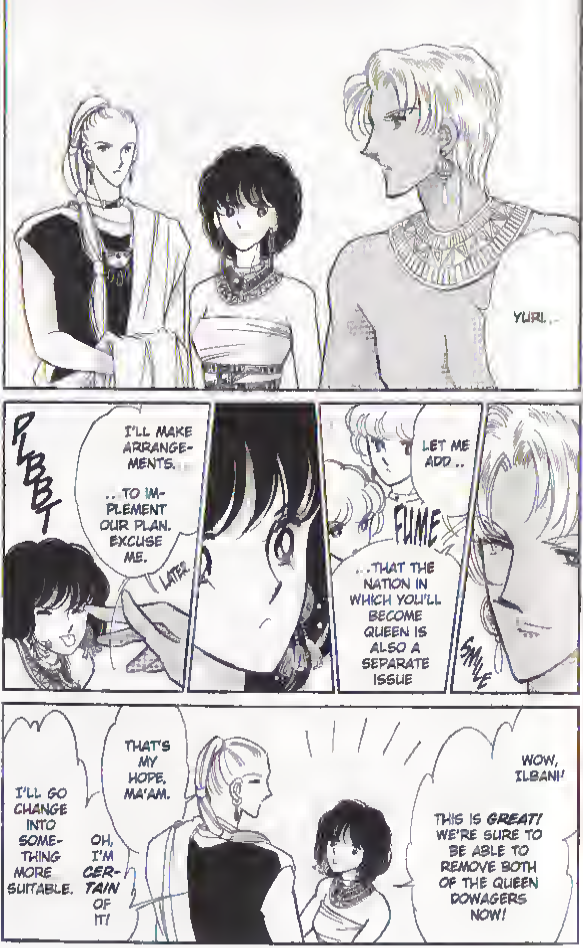

BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP

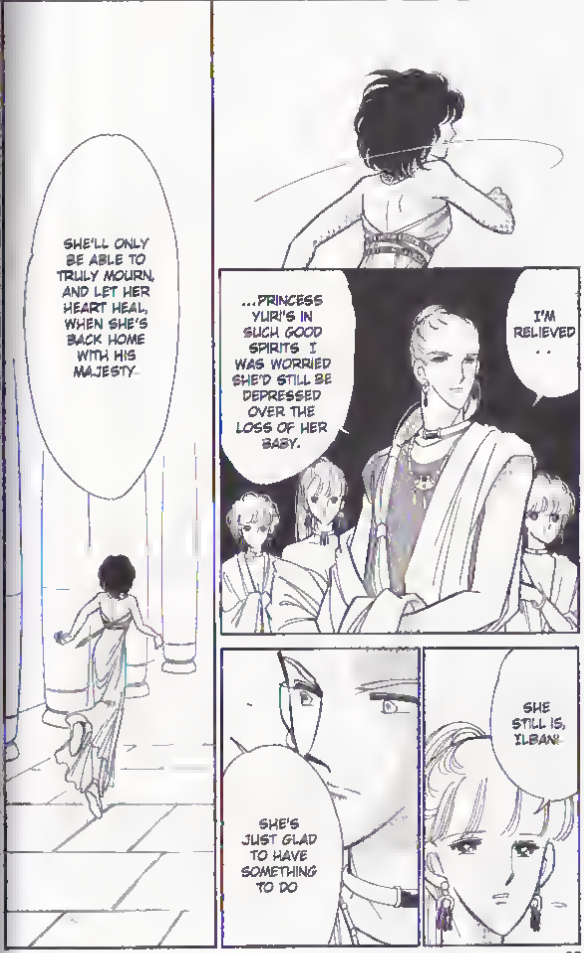
I NEVER IMAGINED THIS... KAIL AND RAMSES WORKING TOGETHER...
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
YOU THINK ..... ...I'D CONSPIRE WITH OUR ENEMIES?
.....A SUPERB TACTICIAN. I ONLY ASK YOU TO READ THE SITUATION FOR YOURSELF.
SIR, YOU ARE...
YOU MUST BE BEHIND THIS PLAN, ILLIAN!
DID YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE PERSUADING MURSLI IT?
SMILE
AND IT COULD WELL TURN, IN THIS MOMENT, ON RAMSES' DECISION!


...I WILL JOIN MURSILI II IN ADDRESSING THIS PARTICULAR MATTER.
ALL RIGHT...


THAT'S
WONDERFUL,
RAMSES!

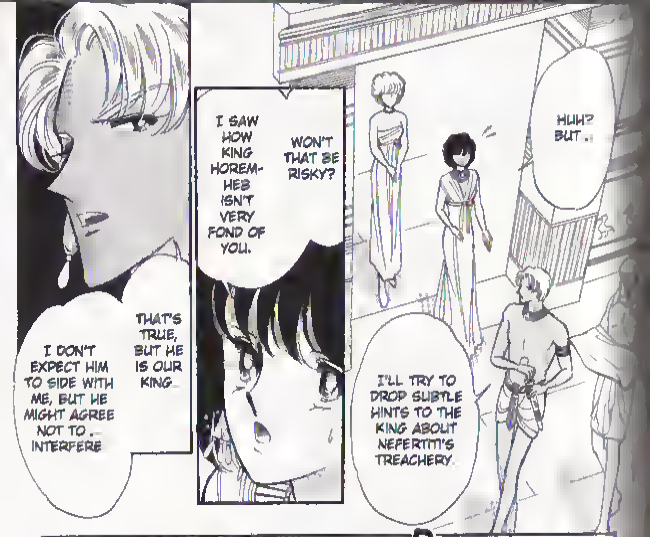

NEFERTITI'S INTERFERENCE IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS DOESN'T BENEFIT EGYPT
BUT DON'T FORGET, ILBANI, THAT A STATE OF WAR EXISTS BETWEEN US. THAT REMAINS UNCHANGED.
OF COURSE, SIR.
...CUT OFF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE QUEEN DOWAGERS!
THEN THE FIRST THING TO DO IS...
TOGETHER, THERE'S NOTHING THEY CAN'T ACCOMPLISH!
THIS IS AMAZING! KAIL AND RAMSES IN ALLIANCE!
NAKIA AND NEFERTITI HAD BETTER WATCH OUT!

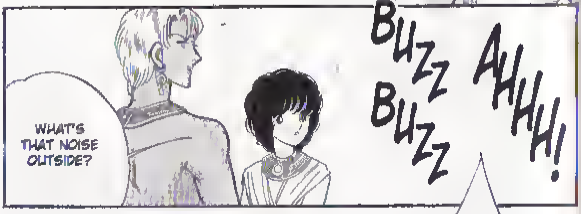

YURI...
PBBT
I'LL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS...
...TO IMPLEMENT OUR PLAN. EXCUSE ME.
LATER
LET ME ADD..
FUME
...THAT THE NATION IN WHICH YOU'LL BECOME QUEEN IS ALSO A SEPARATE ISSUE
SMILE
I'LL GO CHANGE INTO SOMETHING MORE SUITABLE.
OH, I'M CERTAIN OF IT!
THAT'S MY HOPE, MA'AM.
WOW, ILBANI!
THIS IS GREAT! WE'RE SURE TO BE ABLE TO REMOVE BOTH OF THE QUEEN DOWAGERS NOW!


SHE'LL ONLY BE ABLE TO TRULY MOURN, AND LET HER HEART HEAL, WHEN SHE'S BACK HOME WITH HIS MAJESTY.
I'M RELIEVED . .
...PRINCESS YURI'S IN SUCH GOOD SPIRITS. I WAS WORRIED SHE'D STILL BE DEPRESSED OVER THE LOSS OF HER BABY.
SHE STILL IS, ILBAN.
SHE'S JUST GLAD TO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO

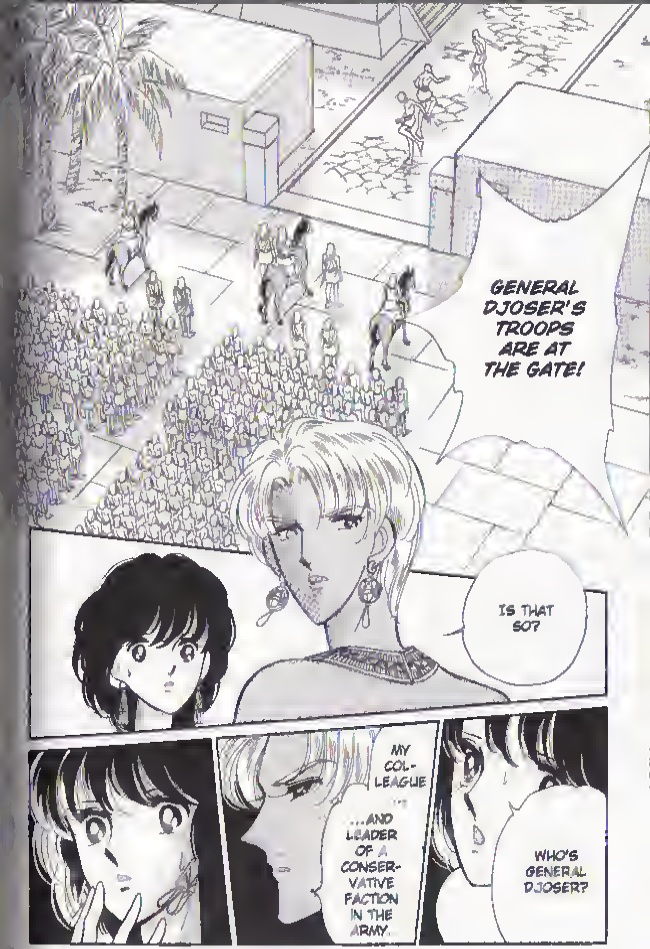
...PRINCESS YURI WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO BRING OUT THE FULLNESS OF HER SORROW WHEN SHE IS WITH HIS MAJESTY
JUST AS HIS MAJESTY CAN SLEEP PEACEFULLY ONLY WHEN PRINCESS YURI IS BESIDE HIM...

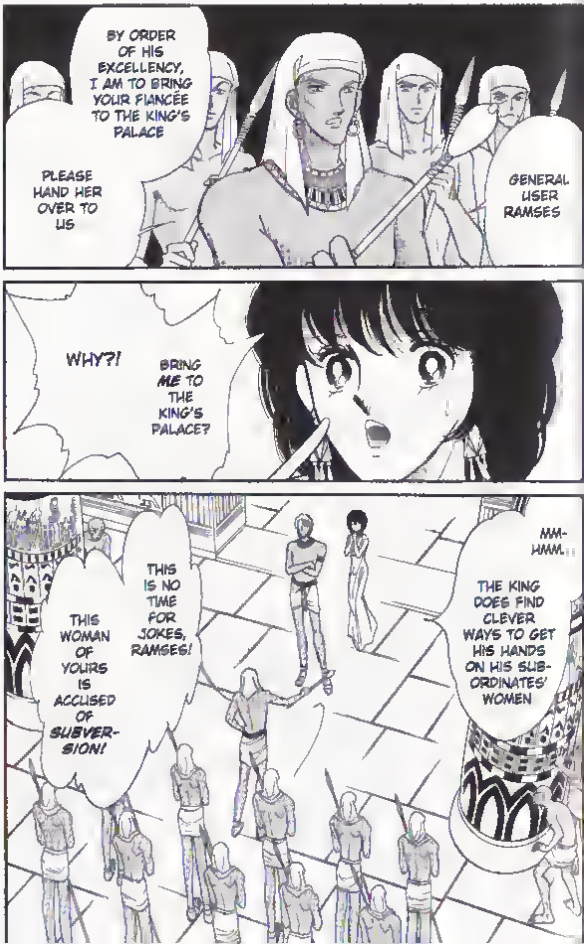
I'LL HELP RAMSES OBTAIN EVIDENCE OF NEFERTITI AND NAKIA'S TREASON...
AT LAST! SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR KAIL!
...WHICH WILL ENABLE KAIL TO OUST NAKIA!
I'M OFF TO THE KING'S PALACE.

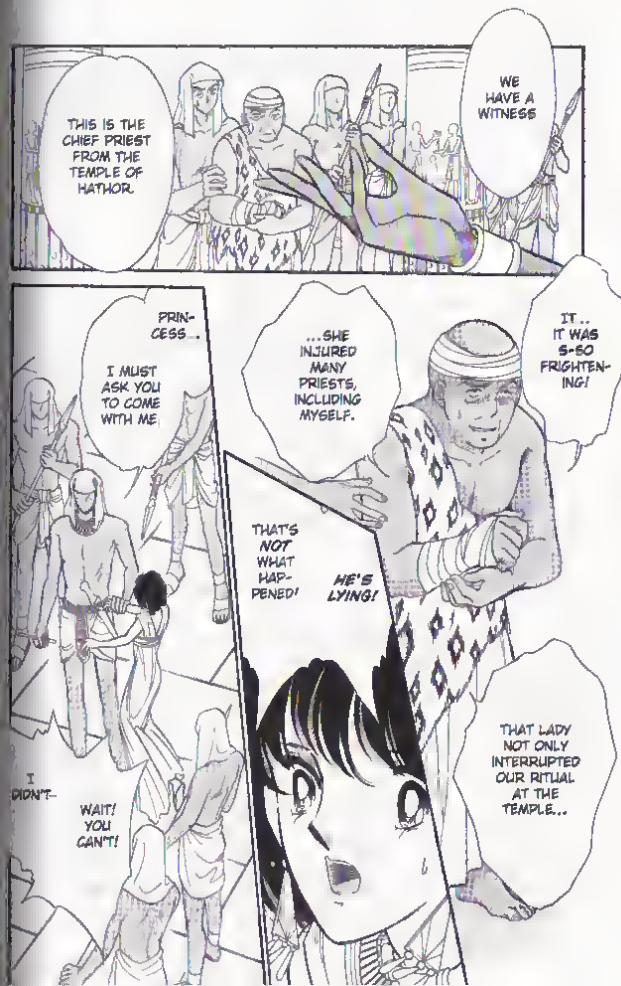

I'LL TRY TO DROP SUBTLE HINTS TO THE KING ABOUT NEFERTITI'S TREACHERY.
HUH? BUT...
I SAW HOW KING HOREMHEB ISN'T VERY FOND OF YOU.
WON'T THAT BE RISKY?
I DON'T EXPECT HIM TO SIDE WITH ME, BUT HE MIGHT AGREE NOT TO... INTERFERE
THAT'S TRUE, BUT HE IS OUR KING...

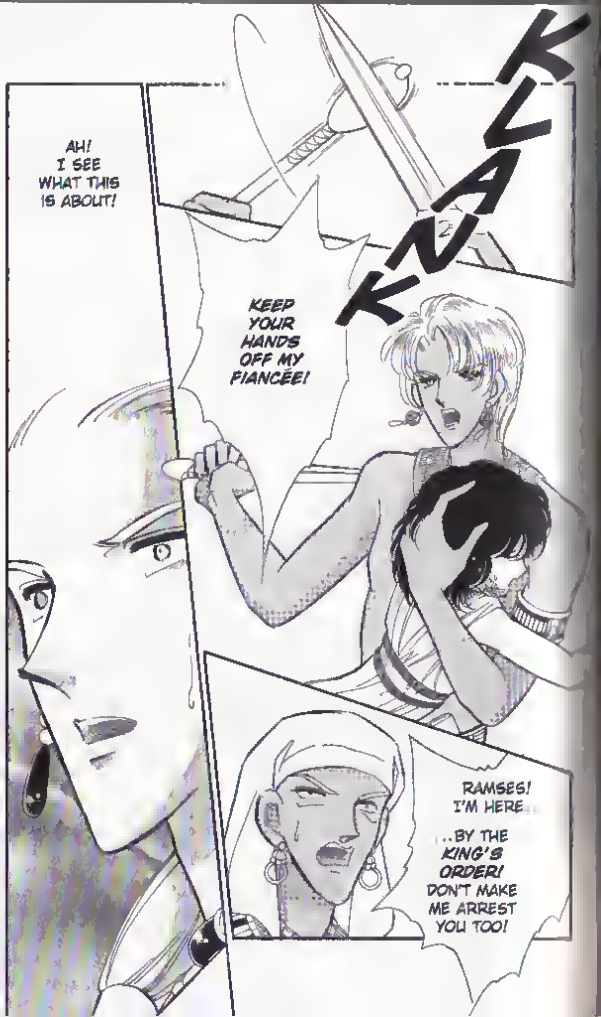

WHAT'S THAT NOISE OUTSIDE?
BUZZ BUZZ
AHHH!

O GENERAL RAMSES!
THERE'S A PROBLEM SIR!


GENERAL DJOSER'S TROOPS ARE AT THE GATE!
IS THAT SO?
MY COL-LEAGUE ...
...AND LEADER OF A CONSER-VATIVE FACTION IN THE ARMY.
WHO'S GENERAL DJOSER?


BY ORDER OF HIS EXCELLENCY, I AM TO BRING YOUR FIANCÉE TO THE KING'S PALACE
PLEASE HAND HER OVER TO US
GENERAL USER RAMSES
WHY?!
BRING *ME* TO THE KING'S PALACE?
THIS WOMAN OF YOURS IS ACCUSED OF *SUBVERSION!*
THIS IS NO TIME FOR JOKES, RAMSES!
MM-HMM...
THE KING DOES FIND CLEVER WAYS TO GET HIS HANDS ON HIS SUB-ORDINATES' WOMEN


THIS IS THE CHIEF PRIEST FROM THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR.
WE HAVE A WITNESS
PRIN-CESS...
I MUST ASK YOU TO COME WITH ME.
...SHE INJURED MANY PRIESTS, INCLUDING MYSELF.
IT... IT WAS S-SO FRIGHTEN-ING!
THAT'S NOT WHAT HAP-PENED!
HE'S LYING!
THAT LADY NOT ONLY INTERRUPTED OUR RITUAL AT THE TEMPLE...
I DIDN'T-
WAIT! YOU CAN'T!


KNACK
AH! I SEE WHAT THIS IS ABOUT!
KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY FIANCÉE!
RAMSES! I'M HERE...
...BY THE KING'S ORDER! DON'T MAKE ME ARREST YOU TOO!

SEIZE HIM!
BUT IT'S PLAIN YOU'RE A CO-CONSPIRATOR!
I'M TOO LATE, NEFERTITI...
RAMSES!
IT WAS ALL A PLOY!
SHE'S SMELLED A PLOT AND TAKEN PREEMPTIVE ACTION!
HAS OUT-SMARTED ME!

IT WASN'T REALLY ME THEY CAME FOR...
...IT WAS RAMSES! NEFERTITI *KNEW* HOW HE'D REACT!

WAIT!
I'M THE ONE ACCUSED OF A CRIME!
YOU CAN'T ARREST RAMSES FOR WHAT I DID!
I'M THE ONE WHO THREATENED THAT PRIEST!

STOP IT, YURI.
YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.
THE QUEEN DOWAGER HAS WANTED TO GET RID OF ME FOR SOME TIME.
YOUR TROUBLE WITH THIS DOG OF A PRIEST IS A PRETEXT.
IT'S SERVED ITS PURPOSE. THEY HAVE WHAT THEY WANT.
I'LL TESTIFY TO THE FALSITY OF YOUR ARREST!

HANDS OFF HER, I WARN YOU!
WATCH IT, DJOSER!
!!
YOU MAY DO SO LATER
FOR NOW, PRINCESS, PLEASE STAND ASIDE.
SUCH AN ATTITUDE WILL SERVE YOU ILL, RAMSES.
YOUR RESIDENCE IS SURROUNDED BY MY TROOPS.
THE BULK OF YOUR ARMY IS IN MEMPHIS AT THIS TIME.
YOU CAN'T FIGHT US WITH JUST A HOUSE-HOLD GUARD.

A WELL-PREPARED ARREST, I SEE.
TAKE RAMSES AND THE WOMAN AWAY.
WAIT!
MY HOUSEHOLD GUARD COULD HOLD YOU OFF FOR SOME TIME...
...BUT NEFERTITI JUST WANTS ME LEAVE YUR! AND HER FRIENDS ALONE AND I'LL GO QUIETLY.
RAMSES!
ALL RIGHT, I AGREE
THIS IS MY FAULT!
I GAVE THEM THE EXCUSE THEY NEEDED TO ARREST RAMSES!
NOW WE'RE IN A REAL FIX!

HUSH
THIS IS TERRIBLE! OUR MASTER'S BEEN ARRESTED!
WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE ESTATE?
WE MUST PREPARE FOR THE WORST.
THE QUEEN DOWAGER ISN'T LIKELY TO GO EASY.
MOTHER...
MY SON. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HIM...?
SHE'S NOT ONLY CAUSED HIS ARREST, BUT SHE'S DISGRACED THE ENTIRE FAMILY!
BROTHER RAMSES CERTAINLY CHOSE HIS FIANCÉE POORLY!

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THIS MARRIAGE TO A WOMAN FROM AN UNKNOWN FAMILY WAS A BAD IDEA.
YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT, I'D SAY..
AHEM!
DEAR SISTERS, THOUGH YOU ARE ALL MARRIED AND LIVE ELSEWHERE, I KNOW YOU VISIT US OUT OF CONCERN FOR YOUR FAMILY IT IS MOST APPRECIATED
BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, OUR FAMILY IS IN TROUBLE I WOULD ASK THAT FOR NOW YOU REFRAIN FROM TAKING ANY JEWELRY, PLATE AND OTHER THINGS FROM THIS HOUSE
EXCUSE US?
YURI, AS MY BROTHER TOLD YOU.
SO DON'T BLAME YOURSELF.
...HE WASN'T ARRESTED BECAUSE OF YOU.
NEFERT, I...

I'M SURE HE'LL BE HOME QUITE SOON.
AND THE REAL ACCUSATIONS AGAINST HIM ARE FALSE.
THEY'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO PROVE THEM
I'VE EVEN SENT AN EMISSARY TO THE KING TO NEGOTIATE MY BROTHER'S RELEASE. ALL WILL BE WELL.
WELL, OKAY...
NEFERT SEEMS OPTIMISTIC, BUT...
...I CAN'T HELP FEELING RAMSES HAS BEEN CAUGHT IN A VERY STRONG NET...
PRIN-CESS YURI?

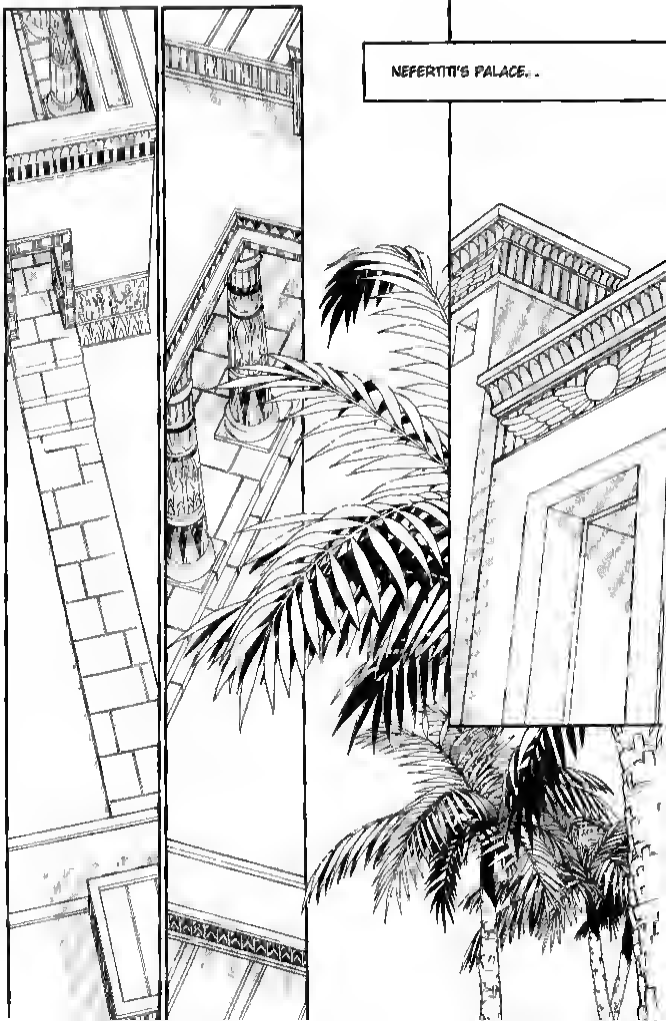
NEFERTITI WANTS RAMSES OUT OF THE WAY.
NOW THAT HE'S BEEN TAKEN TO HER PALACE, SHE'LL BE ABLE TO DO WHATEVER SHE WANTS WITH HIM!
PRINCESS YURI!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S PALACE!
I HAVE TO TESTIFY AGAINST THAT SLIMY PRIEST AND PERSUADE NEFERTITI SHE HAS NO GROUNDS TO HOLD RAMSES!
NO, PRINCESS YURI!

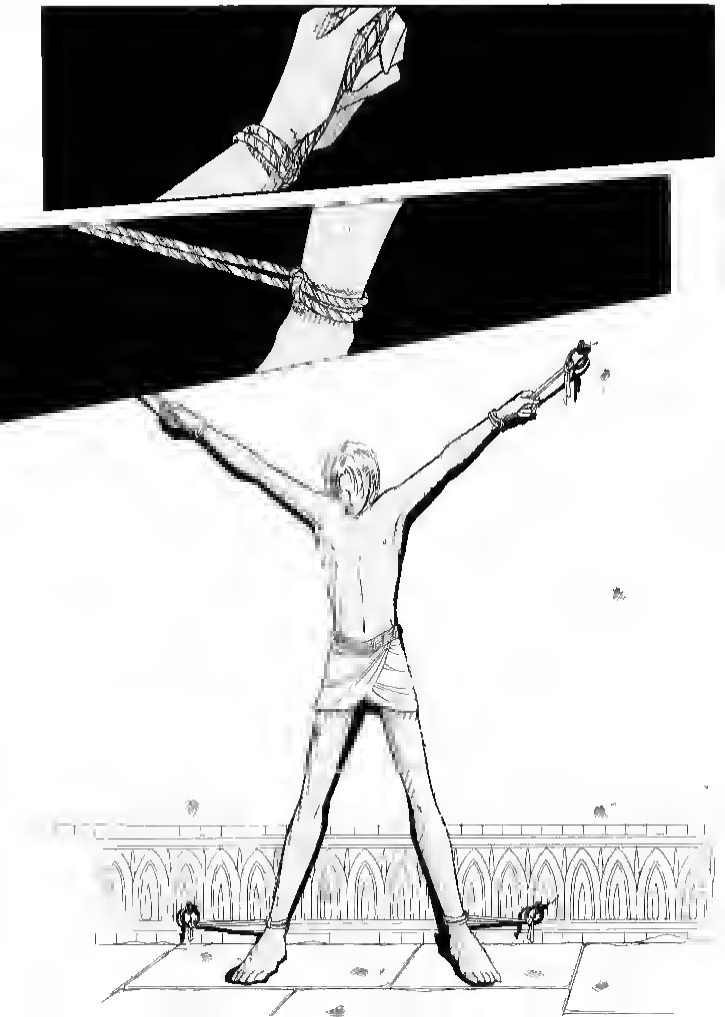
PLEASE STAY HERE, I IMPLORE YOU.
BUT ILBANI, I CAN'T...
IT'S LIKELY YOU AND RAMSES WILL BOTH BE LOCKED UP
YOUR TESTIMONY WON'T CHANGE THE SITUATION.
BUT I CAN'T JUST SIT AROUND AND LET NEFERTITI HAVE HER WAY!
I'M FED UP WITH GIVING IN TO QUEEN DOWAGERS!
BESIDES, RAMSES AGREED TO HELP US REMOVE NAKIA WE CAN'T LEAVE HIM TO ROT!

I'M GOING TO NEFERTITI'S PALACE!
PRINCESS YURI!
I SUG-GEST...
...YOU TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN HOME WITH US.
WHAT?
OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE IN COMING TO EGYPT. .
OUR COUNTRY, AND HIS MAJESTY, NEED YOU.
...WAS TO BRING YOU BACK WE CAN NOW DO SO WITH EASE

BUT...
...WE JUST AGREED WITH RAMSES TO WORK TOGETHER TO PROVE NAKIA AND NEFERTITI'S GUILT...
..SO WE CAN RID OURSELVES OF THEM!
WE'LL FIND SOME OTHER WAY.
RIGHT NOW, OUR PRIORITY IS TAKING YOU HOME.
THIS IS THE MOMENT TO GET YOU OUT OF EGYPT.
PLEASE, PRINCESS YURI
HIS MAJESTY MISSES YOU SO MUCH!
AND I MISS HIM TERRIBLY, BUT ..
RAMSES IS A GENERAL IN THE ARMY OF OUR ENEMY. AS FOR HIS CURRENT TROUBLE, THAT STEMS FROM..
..HIS ONGOING OPPOSITION TO NEFERTITI. SHE'S BEEN WAITING FOR AN EXCUSE TO POUNCE. THAT YOU PROVIDED IT IS PURELY INCIDENTAL.

PRINCESS YURI
...IT REALLY WOULD BE BEST FOR YOU TO RETURN HOME
ILBANI'S RIGHT, BUT I CAN'T LEAVE IT AT THAT!


NEFERTITI'S PALACE. .



HOW ARE YOU FEELING...
...GENERAL RAMSES?
YOU'VE HAD NOTHING THE ENTIRE DAY
YOU MUST BE HUNGRY AND THIRSTY.

ISN'T IT RATHER IRREGULAR THAT, AS I'M CHARGED WITH A CAPITAL CRIME
...I'M BEING HELD HERE INSTEAD OF AT THE KING'S PALACE, YOUR HIGHNESS?
CONSIDER IT A PERSONAL FAVOR FROM ME TO YOU
GLARE
GLARE
YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO PLEDGE YOUR LOYALTY TO ME.
IF YOU DO, I'LL BE HAPPY TO PLEAD FOR THE KING'S MERCY ON YOUR BEHALF

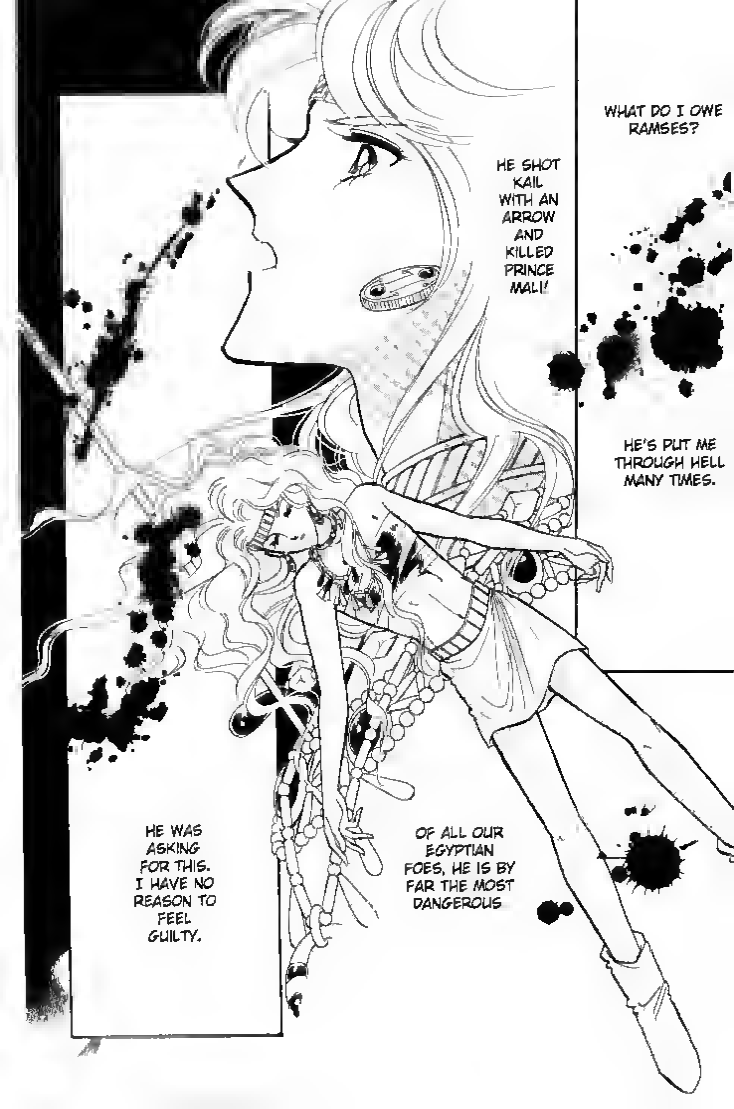
PLEDGE MY LOYALTY TO YOU?
EXCUSE ME, BUT I'M AN EGYPTIAN, NOT A PUPPY EAGER TO WAG HIS TAIL TO PLEASE A WHITE COBRA...
..WHO WOULD SINK HER FANGS INTO THE SOUL OF THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE.
WHIP

TRICKLE
I ASSUME, THEN, THAT THERE IS NOTHING YOU NEED OR REQUEST FROM THIS WHITE COBRA.
YOU ARE FREE TO STAY HERE AS LONG AS YOU WISH.

YOUR HIGH-NESS..
MAY I GIVE THE GENERAL SOME WATER?
I THINK NOT.
BUT THE GENERAL WILL DIE IF HE'S LEFT LIKE THAT, YOUR HIGHNESS.
I DON'T CARE.
IF HE DIES, YOU'LL BURY HIM.
WE'LL TELL THE KING THE GENERAL BROKE FREE AND WANDERED INTO THE DESERT.
YOUR HIGH-NESS..
DON'T FORGET ...
...I'M ONLY CONDUCTING AN INTERROGATION
RAMSES!
HOW I'VE WAITED FOR THIS DAY!

HOREMHEB IS EASY TO MANIPULATE, BUT NOT GENERAL RAMSES!
AS LONG AS HE IS ALIVE, I CAN NEVER TRULY RULE EGYPT.
NOW I CAN DISPOSE OF HIM!

WHEN THE MOON RISES OVER THE PEAK ON THE WEST BANK.
SIR, MAY I ASK..
..WHEN THE BOAT'S LEAVING?
KEEP MOVING, PLEASE.
A BOAT IS WAITING TO TAKE US DOWN THE NILE
AFTER WE TRANSIT THE RIVER WE'LL TRANSFER TO A SEAGOING VESSEL.
REALLY? THEN WE'D BETTER HURRY.
RAMSES IS A GENERAL IN THE ARMY OF OUR ENEMY.
NEFERTITI.. SHE'S BEEN WAITING FOR AN EXCUSE... THAT YOU PROVIDED IT IS... INCIDENTAL.


WHAT DO I OWE RAMSES?
HE SHOT KAIL WITH AN ARROW AND KILLED PRINCE MALI!
HE'S PUT ME THROUGH HELL MANY TIMES.
OF ALL OUR EGYPTIAN FOES, HE IS BY FAR THE MOST DANGEROUS
HE WAS ASKING FOR THIS. I HAVE NO REASON TO FEEL GUILTY.

PRIN-
CESS
YURI ..
..COULD
YOU HURRY,
PLEASE?
THEY'RE
LATE..
ARE YOU
SURE
THEY'RE
COMING?
YEP
THEY
PAID A
DEPOSIT.
SO WE
CAN
AFFORD
TO BE
PATIENT.

NO ONE ELSE I KNOW HAS SUCH A VISION... EXCEPT KAIL.
A NATION IS NOT JUST ITS ARISTOCRACY
EVERY CITIZEN SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEAD A FULFILLING LIFE.
THAT IS WHY I SEEK THE EGYPTIAN THRONE!

PRINCESS YURI?
RAMSES CANNOT BE LEFT TO THIS HORRIBLE FATE!
RAMSES HAS BEEN BOTH MY NEMESIS AND MY SAVIOR
HE AND KAIL ARE ENEMIES, YET EACH OPENS HIS HEART TO THE COMMON PEOPLE.

HEY, IT'S TIME TO GO
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S THEIR OWN FAULT THEY'RE LATE.
LET'S JUST SAY THEY FORFEITED THEIR DEPOSIT HEH HEH.
PRINCESS YURI?

I'M SORRY, BUT...
...I CAN'T RETURN HOME JUST YET. I MUST...
...I MUST RESCUE GENERAL RAMSES!

PRINCESS YURI..
IT IS HIS MAJESTY'S WISH THAT YOU RETURN WITH US..
...BUT YOU WOULD STAY... FOR HIS ENEMY?
I KNOW, I KNOW... IT SOUNDS CRAZY!

BELIEVE ME, I'M GENUINELY TORN HERE! THE THING IS...
...WHILE HIS MAJESTY HAS MANY SCORES TO SETTLE WITH RAMSES, WOULD HE WANT HIM...
...MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD, AT THE HANDS OF ANOTHER TRAITOROUS QUEEN DOWAGER?

ILBANI ..?
I AM SORRY YOUR RESCUE EFFORT WAS IN VAIN.
THANK YOU, ILBANI!
I SEE WE WON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND.
WE'RE TOO LATE TO CATCH THE BOAT ANYWAY
CLUTCH
YES! THAT'S WHERE RAMSES IS BEING HELD
PRINCESS YURI!
DO YOU INTEND TO GO STRAIGHT TO NEFERTITI'S PALACE FROM HERE?

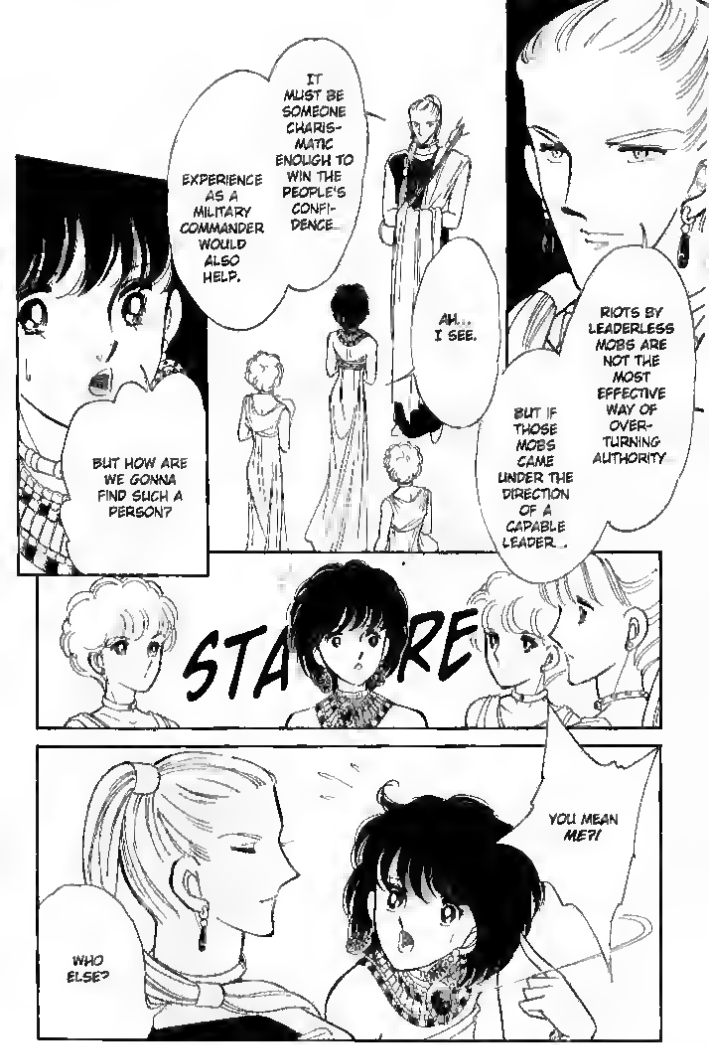
ILBANI, SAY SOMETHING!
IT IS UNLIKELY...
...THE FOUR OF US COULD RESCUE RAMSES ALONE, PRINCESS YURI.
WE HAVE NO OTHER OPTION!
PERHAPS, BUT WE MIGHT CONSIDER...
...CREATING A SITUATION WHICH WOULD COMPEL NEFERTITI TO RELEASE HIM
HUH? LIKE WHAT?

WELL, YES...
...YOU MUST HAVE SOMETHING IN MIND.
ILBANI.
I THOUGHT EVENTS MIGHT TAKE THIS TURN, SO I'VE GIVEN SOME THOUGHT TO IT.
HUG
I WISH TO STATE THAT I'M JOINING THIS RESCUE MISSION UNDER PROTEST, MA'AM.
ILBANI! ♡
WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
SO NOTED. NOW SPILL IT!

GENERAL RAMSES IS EGYPT'S MOST RENOWNED AND CAPABLE MILITARY COMMANDER
A SITUATION COULD ARISE THAT WOULD MAKE HIS RELEASE AND RETURN TO SERVICE IMPERATIVE TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE CURRENT REGIME
SUCH AS..?
THE KING IS AN *UTTER FOOL* TO LET NEFERTITI TAKE HIM OUT OF ACTION!
EGYPT IS ALREADY IN DESPERATE NEED OF HIM.
. SINCE THEY'RE AT WAR WITH THE HITTITE EMPIRE. ONLY RAMSES' MILITARY PROWESS CAN MATCH KAIL'S!

THAT IS SO, BUT...
...THE FRONT LINES ARE FAR AWAY. THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP THERE IS NOT KEENLY FELT HERE.
?!
THEN WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE DO?
WE NEED TO FOMENT A CRISIS THAT WILL BEAR DIRECTLY ON THE PEOPLE OF THEBES.
IN OTHER WORDS, WE NEED TO STIR UP A REBELLION

A REBELLION?!
I PRESUME YOU'VE THOUGHT THAT OUT, TOO?
YES, MA'AM.
THEBES
TO THE SOUTH OF THEBES
FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS THERE HAVE BEEN RIOTS IN ELEPHANTINE OVER FOOD SHORTAGES AND FRUSTRATION WITH THE REPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT.
THE TOWN IS RIFE WITH UNREST. THE TINDER IS READY, ALL THAT'S NEEDED IS A SPARK TO IGNITE THE INFERNO.
ELEPHANTINE
NUBIA
...LIES A TOWN CALLED ELEPHANTINE NEAR THE BORDER WITH NUBIA.
A SPARK?

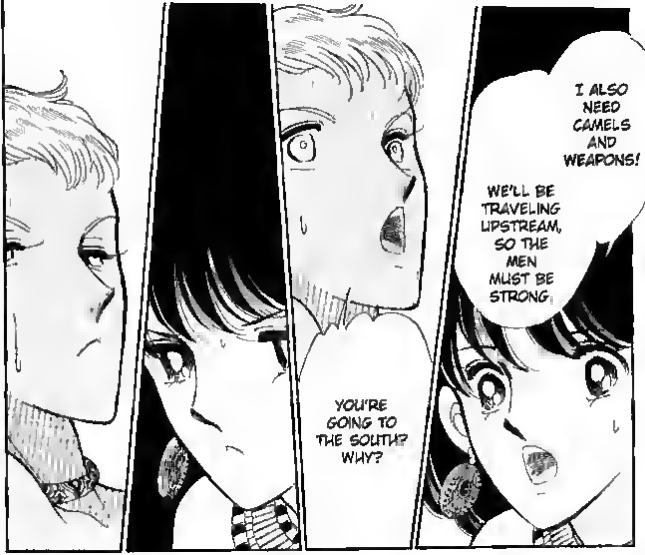

RIOTS BY LEADERLESS MOBS ARE NOT THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF OVERTURNING AUTHORITY
BUT IF THOSE MOBS CAME UNDER THE DIRECTION OF A CAPABLE LEADER...
AH... I SEE.
IT MUST BE SOMEONE CHARISMATIC ENOUGH TO WIN THE PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE.
EXPERIENCE AS A MILITARY COMMANDER WOULD ALSO HELP.
BUT HOW ARE WE GONNA FIND SUCH A PERSON?
STARE
YOU MEAN ME?!
WHO ELSE?

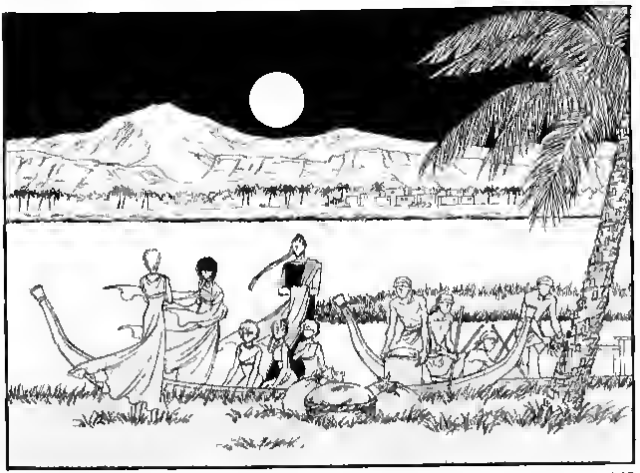
YOU SEE THE POSSIBILITIES IN THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS NOTIONS.
THIS IS WHY HIS MAJESTY VALUES YOU SO MUCH, ILBANI.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
WE WEREN'T NOTIFIED YOU'D GONE OUT.
OH...DON'T WORRY, I WAS JUST OUT FOR A WALK.

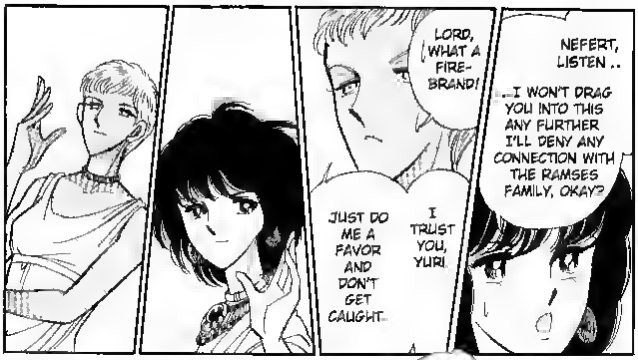
NEFERT
NEFERT, WAKE UP!
SHAKE
SHAKE
MMM... YURI...?
WHY'RE YOU UP AT THIS HOUR?

NEFERT, I NEED A FAVOR
LEND ME ONE OF YOUR FAMILY'S BOATS
I NEED A FAST ONE, AND THE MEN TO CREW IT
HUH?!


I ALSO NEED CAMELS AND WEAPONS!
WE'LL BE TRAVELING UPSTREAM, SO THE MEN MUST BE STRONG.
YOU'RE GOING TO THE SOUTH? WHY?



THE MORE I KNOW YOU, THE MORE I SEE...
...WHY MY BROTHER FINDS YOU SO CAPTIVATING
THANKS, NEFERT. I REALLY OWE YOU.
PROCURE THE CAMELS AT YOUR DESTINATION. OUR MEN WILL HELP YOU WITH THAT.


LORD, WHAT A FIRE-BRAND!
I TRUST YOU, YURI
JUST DO ME A FAVOR AND DON'T GET CAUGHT.
NEFERT, LISTEN ..
...I WON'T DRAG YOU INTO THIS ANY FURTHER I'LL DENY ANY CONNECTION WITH THE RAMSES FAMILY, OKAY?

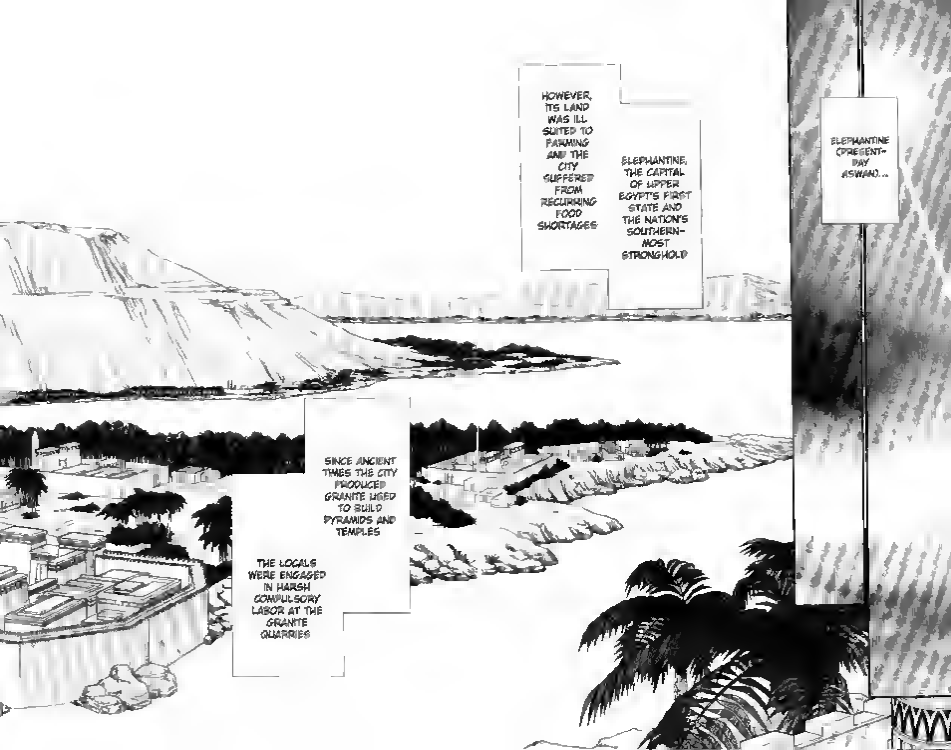
TO ELEPHANTINE!

KING HOREMHEB'S PALACE...
NO WORD FROM NEFERTITI YET?
SHE TOLD ME SHE WOULD INTERROGATE GENERAL RAMSES ON MY BEHALF, BUT IT'S TAKING FAR TOO LONG!
SIR..
...I AGREE, BUT THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.
THEN AT LEAST MAKE AN INQUIRY ABOUT HIS SAFETY.
THE NATION CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE ITS FINEST GENERAL.
BUT BE *TACTFUL!* DON'T UPSET THE QUEEN DOWAGER!

NEFERTITI'S PALACE ..
YOUR HIGH-NESS...
...THERE'S A MESSENGER FROM THE KING'S PALACE
REALLY?
WELL, JUST IGNORE HIM
AS I SAID, IGNORE HIM
BUT HE'S FROM THE KING, YOUR HIGHNESS
HIS EXCELLENCY WISHES TO KNOW HOW GENERAL RAMSES IS DOING

IT WILL BE CONCLUDED THAT HE ESCAPED AND DIED WHILE ON THE RUN.
GENERAL RAMSES WILL SOON BE FOUND DEAD IN THE DESERT.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

HOW LONG HE SURVIVES DEPENDS ON HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION.
HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA
KING HOREMHEB SHOULD BE GRATEFUL THAT I'M...
...DISPOSING OF THIS MAN WHO KEEPS GETTING IN HIS WAY!


ELEPHANTINE, THE CAPITAL OF UPPER EGYPT'S FIRST STATE AND THE NATION'S SOUTHERN-MOST STRONGHOLD
HOWEVER, ITS LAND WAS ILL SUITED TO FARMING AND THE CITY SUFFERED FROM RECURRING FOOD SHORTAGES
ELEPHANTINE, PRESENT-DAY ASWAN...
SINCE ANCIENT TIMES THE CITY PRODUCED GRANITE USED TO BUILD PYRAMIDS AND TEMPLES
THE LOCALS WERE ENGAGED IN HARSH COMPULSORY LABOR AT THE GRANITE QUARRIES

GRARRR
RARRRR
SET TAHARQA! FREE!
RELEASE TAHARQA!
MORE FOOD FOR LABORERS!
THIS IS AN UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY! DISPERSE!
OR WE'LL ARREST YOU!

SEE THAT, TAHARQA?
THE RABBLE ARE POWER-LESS TO HELP YOU
HA HA HA HA...
STUPID PEONS.
...WILL BE FILLED WITH FEAR...
...AND WILL NEVER AGAIN THINK OF DISOBEYING THE GOVERN-MENT.
WHEN YOU ARE PUBLICLY EXECUTED, THE PEOPLE..
FORGET IT.
YOU'RE TOO POORLY EQUIPPED.
THAT'S RIGHT! OUR CURRENT RATIONS ARE FAR TOO MEAGER!
LET'S RESCUE TAHARQA AND SEIZE THE FOOD WAREHOUSES!
ALL TAHARQA DID WAS DEMAND FOOD FOR THE QUARRY'S STARVING, OVERWORKED LABORERS!

FIRST THINGS FIRST. TAHARQA IS YOUR LEADER, ISN'T HE?
IF YOU WANT TO RESCUE HIM, YOU NEED TO GET YOURSELVES ORGANIZED.
WHAT? WHO ARE *YOU*?!
GATHER AS MANY MEN AS YOU CAN FIND...
...WHO SHARE YOUR GRIEVANCES
HUH?!
EXCUSE US!
A *FOOD RIOT* IS ABOUT TO ERUPT IN A NEARBY VILLAGE!

TELL THEM NOT TO STRIKE OUT YET
HAVE THEM ASSEMBLE HERE INSTEAD
WE WILL!
NOW...
...WE'LL SEE HOW MANY WILL COME.
DOES ANYONE KNOW THE DISPOSITION OF GOVERNMENT FORCES IN THIS TOWN?
...

IT'S TOO CRUEL!
DON'T EXECUTE TAHARQA!
DON'T DO IT!
THEY MUST NEVER, EVER MAKE DEMANDS.
LABORERS MUST ONLY OBEY, TAHARQA. NOTHING ELSE
IGNORE THEM...
THEY'RE JUST A GAGGLE OF GEESE.

FWEEEEET
DO IT!
WHAT WAS THAT?!

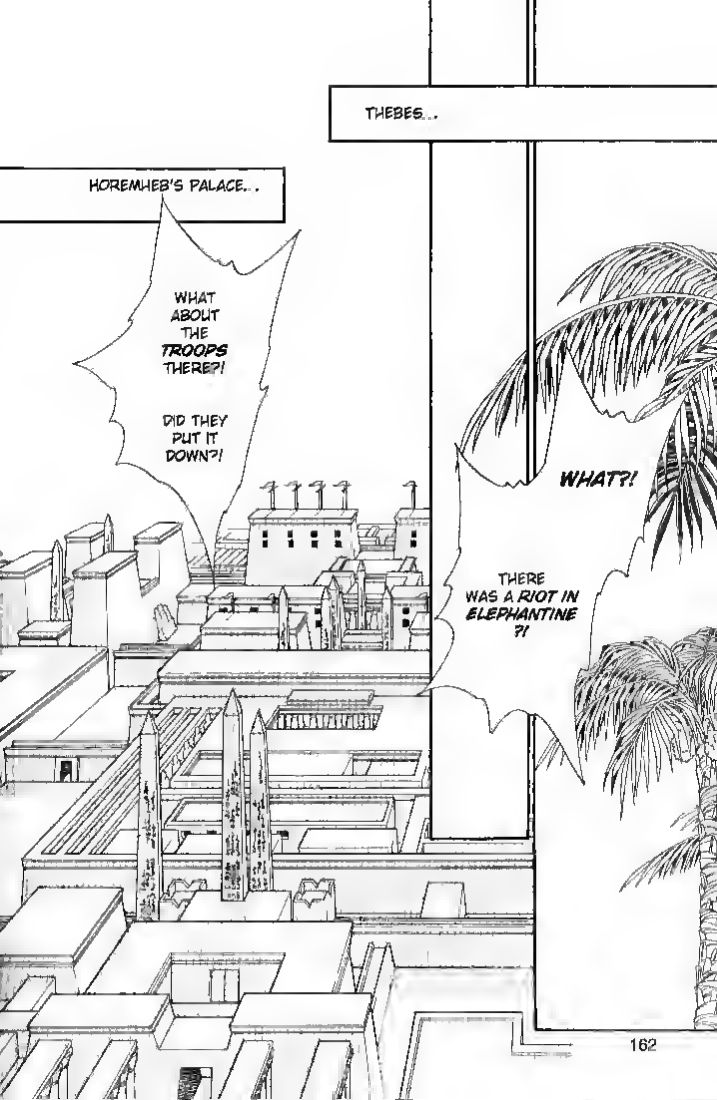
THOOM
HEY, YOU SCUM! STOP!
SHOOM
WUUPP
HUH?!
?!
TA-RUMP
TA-RUMP
TA-RUMP
TA-RUMP

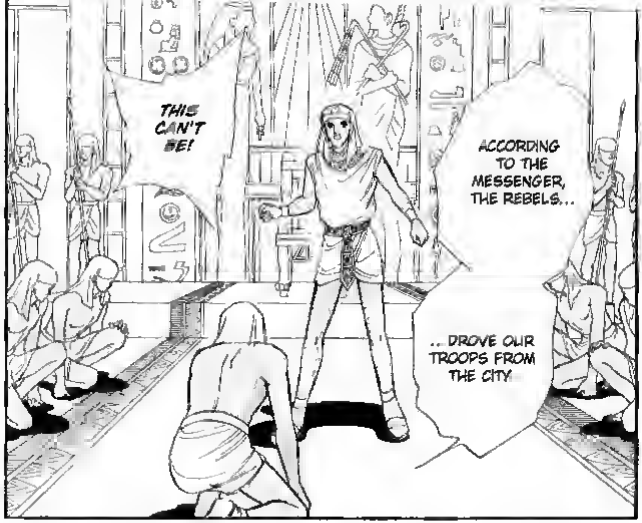
FWEEEET
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
TRUP
TRUP
TRUP

DON'T LET TAHARQA GET AWAY!
GO AFTER THEM, FOOLS!
HUSH
A PLAN?
CLOP
TRUTH IS, WE'D ALMOST LOST HOPE, BUT THEN...
...SOMEONE CAME UP WITH A PLAN.
CLOP
...WAS AMAZINGLY DEFIANT, KUNES!
WHAT YOU JUST DID...
KUNES!
YOU OKAY, TAHARQA?
CLOP

THE SIGNAL?
WHO CAME UP WITH THIS PLAN? IT'S LIKE A MILITARY OPERATION!
FWEEEEEET
AH! THERE'S THE SIGNAL TO ASSEMBLE.
I'LL FILL YOU IN LATER.

YOU...
...ORGANIZED MY RESCUE?!
IT WAS NO TROUBLE
WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE A MAN OF YOUR CAPABILTIES, TAHARQA
SMILE
?!


THEBES...
HOREMHEB'S PALACE..
WHAT ABOUT THE TROOPS THERE?!
DID THEY PUT IT DOWN?!
WHAT?!
THERE WAS A RIOT IN ELEPHANTINE ?!


THIS CAN'T BE!
ACCORDING TO THE MESSENGER, THE REBELS...
.. DROVE OUR TROOPS FROM THE CITY.

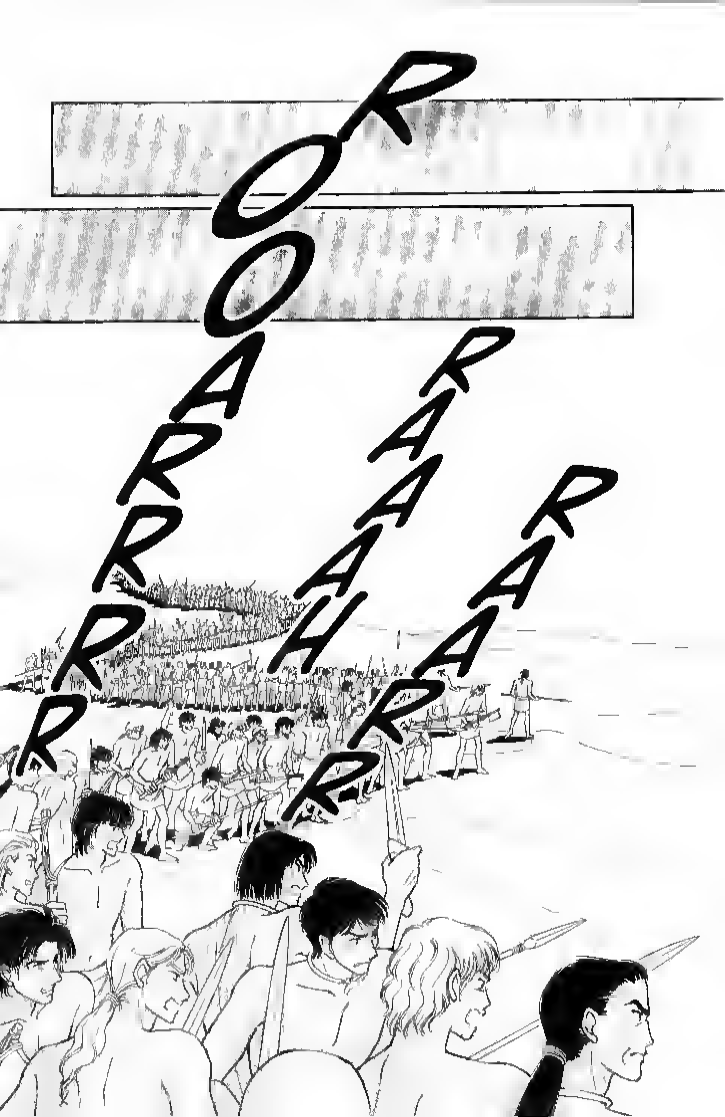
A ROYAL GARRISON OF EGYPT TROUNCED BY A MOB OF COMMONERS?!
MY ARMY... DEFEATED BY FARMERS?!

I.. I FEAR WE MAY HAVE A FULL-SCALE UPRISING, SIR!
AND THEIR RANKS ARE SWELLING AS THEY ADVANCE THROUGH CITIES SUCH AS KENI AND EDOF.
YES, SIR!
THE REPORT FURTHER STATES THAT THESE COMMONERS ARE NOW MOVING NORTH.

FEH! THAT RABBLE WILL GET NOTHING!
FOR FEWER TAXES AND AN END TO COMPULSORY LABOR, SIR.
THIS IS INTOLERABLE!
WHY ARE THEY DOING THIS?! WHAT ARE THEIR DEMANDS?!
I WOULD, EXCELLENCY.
WE HAVE A SITUATION THAT REQUIRES GENERAL RAMSES PLEASE RELEASE HIM!
WHY THE FUSS, YOUR EXCELLENCY?
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE, YOUR HIGHNESS

WEREN'T SOME RELUCTANT TO GO TO THE FRONT TO FACE THE HITTITES? ONE OF THOSE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE THIS
HAVE YOU NO OTHER GENERALS, EXCELLENCY?
I'M AWARE OF THAT, BUT AN INSURRECTION HAS BURST FROM THE SOUTH AND IS APPROACHING THEBES!
...EXCEPT HE'S STILL ACCUSED OF SUBVERSION
A WORD ...
...OF ADVICE, EXCELLENCY. AS KING OF EGYPT, YOU'D DO WELL TO REFRAIN...
...FROM PANICKING WHENEVER THERE'S A MINOR DISTURBANCE SOMEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY
...

HE'LL HAVE TO SUPPRESS THESE MALCONTENTS!
HMPH! SUMMON GENERAL DJOSER!
YES, SIR!
BUT I'M ONLY STATING FACTS!
EXCUSE ME, SIR...
DON'T EXAGGERATE! THEY'RE JUST A GANG OF LOWLIFES!
REBEL FORCE?
THE REBEL FORCE IS WITHIN SIGHT TO THE SOUTH!
YOUR EXCELLENCY!
WHAT WE SEE ISN'T A MERE GANG, BUT A VERITABLE BATTALION!
AND BY THE LOOKS OF THINGS, THEY'RE WELL ORGANIZED!

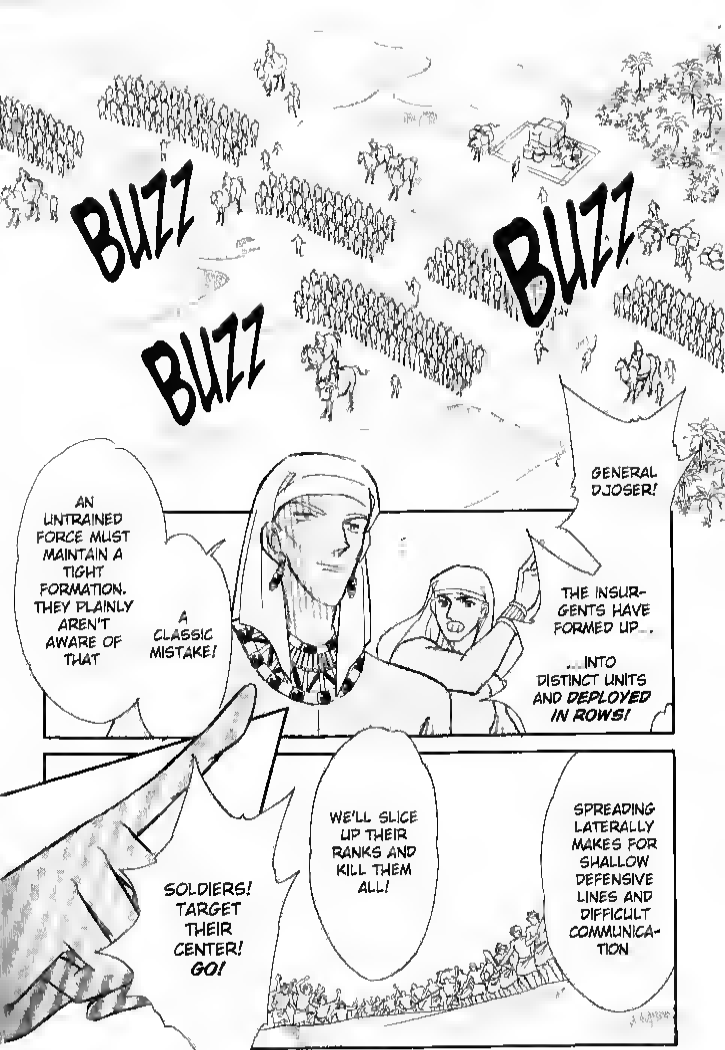

ROARRRR
RAAAHRRAAR

PRINCESS YURI.
...WE'VE REACHED THEBES.
GOT HERE IN RECORD TIME, TOO
EVEN SO..
...I WONDER IF WE'RE TOO LATE
RAMSES IS A STRONG MAN, MA'AM.
I KNOW, BUT...
PRINCESS YURI!!

THANKS, TAHARQA
TA-RUMP
TA-RUMP
THEBES IS SENDING OUT ITS TROOPS!
TA-RUMP
GENERAL DJOSER, MA'AM!
WHO'S THEIR COMMANDER?
THIS WON'T BE AS EASY AS I'D HOPED.
I SEE..
STILL, I'M NOT SURPRISED NEFERTITI'S LIKE NAKIA. ONCE SHE GETS HER TALONS IN SOMETHING...
...SHE'LL FIGHT THE DEVIL HIMSELF BEFORE SHE'LL LET GO.

THIS A GREAT DAY!
WE'RE READY TO TAKE ON ANYTHING THEBES THROWS AT US!
THE KING'S TROOPS ARE TAKING POSITION!
LISTEN UP, ALL OF YOU!
I WILL LEAD OUR CENTER! RYUI WILL OVERSEE OUR RIGHT FLANK AND SHALA OUR LEFT!
HADI'S UNIT WILL TAKE UP A POSITION TO THE RIGHT OF RYUI'S!
TIMING IS CRUCIAL! AND WE CAN AFFORD NO MISTAKES!

YES, MA'AM!
YES, MA'AM!
YES, MA'AM!
PRIN-CESS YURI!
TAHARQA ?
PLEASE LET ME LEAD THE RIGHTMOST UNIT!
YOU'VE AIDED OUR STRUGGLE AS NO ONE HAS...
...BUT IT'S STILL OUR STRUGGLE!
I ONLY ASK FOR A ROLE THAT BEFITS US!
VERY WELL, HADI'S UNIT IS YOURS.
THANK YOU, PRINCESS YURI!


BUZZ
BUZZ
BUZZ
GENERAL DJOSER!
THE INSURGENTS HAVE FORMED UP...
...INTO DISTINCT UNITS AND DEPLOYED IN ROWS!
AN UNTRAINED FORCE MUST MAINTAIN A TIGHT FORMATION. THEY PLAINLY AREN'T AWARE OF THAT
A CLASSIC MISTAKE!
SPREADING LATERALLY MAKES FOR SHALLOW DEFENSIVE LINES AND DIFFICULT COMMUNICATION
WE'LL SLICE UP THEIR RANKS AND KILL THEM ALL!
SOLDIERS! TARGET THEIR CENTER! GO!

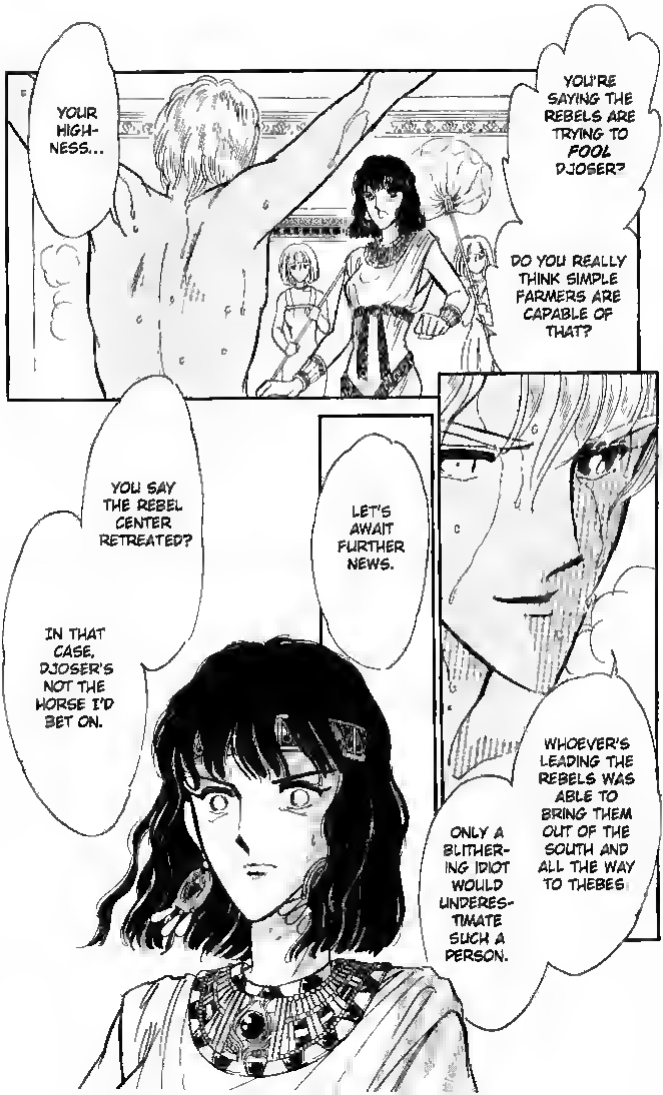
RAAH
HERE THEY COME! ATTACK!
ROAR
ROAR
ROAR
THWUK
THWUK
AAGH!
THEY'RE ALL COMING AT US!
AH! THEY'VE PUT THEIR FOCUS ON OUR CENTER!

TOO MANY OF THEM! WE CAN'T HOLD!
JUST HANG ON!
GENERAL DJOSER, THE INSURGENTS ARE PANICKING!
OF COURSE! WE'RE TEARING OUT THEIR HEART!
WE CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE!
THEY'LL KILL US ALL!
ROAR
RAAH
ROAR
RAAAAHH
ROAR
ROAR
ROAR

ROAR
ROAR
AH HAH! THEIR CENTER'S COLLAPSING!
AFTER THEM! DON'T LEAVE A SINGLE MAN ALIVE!
CENTER UNIT!
RETREAT! RETREAT!

NEFERTITI'S PALACE ..
MM-HMM.
WELL, THAT'S AS I EXPECTED.
DID YOU HEAR THAT, RAMSES?
THE BULK OF THE INSURGENTS ARE NOW IN RETREAT.
THE KING WISHED ME TO RELEASE YOU TO HELP FIGHT THEM.
BUT IT SEEMS YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY NEEDED

SNORT
YOU FIND IT FUNNY?
IT'S A TRICK.
WHAT?
...INSTEAD OF MAINTAINING A TIGHT FORMATION.
THE REBELS SPREAD OUT...
WELL, THAT'S WHAT'S TO BE EXPECTED FROM BUMPKINS
THEY BROKE AND RAN AS SOON AS DJOSER'S TROOPS ATTACKED THEIR CENTER

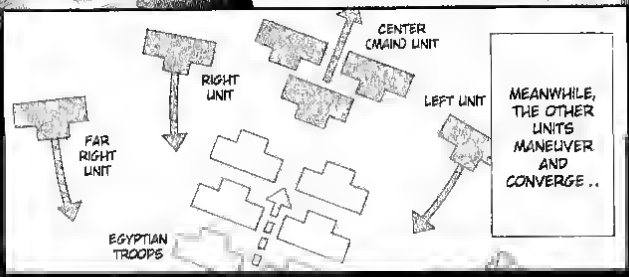

YOUR HIGH-NESS...
YOU'RE SAYING THE REBELS ARE TRYING TO FOOL DJOSER?
DO YOU REALLY THINK SIMPLE FARMERS ARE CAPABLE OF THAT?
YOU SAY THE REBEL CENTER RETREATED?
LET'S AWAIT FURTHER NEWS.
IN THAT CASE, DJOSER'S NOT THE HORSE I'D BET ON.
WHOEVER'S LEADING THE REBELS WAS ABLE TO BRING THEM OUT OF THE SOUTH AND ALL THE WAY TO THEBES.
ONLY A BLITHER-ING IDIOT WOULD UNDERES-TIMATE SUCH A PERSON.

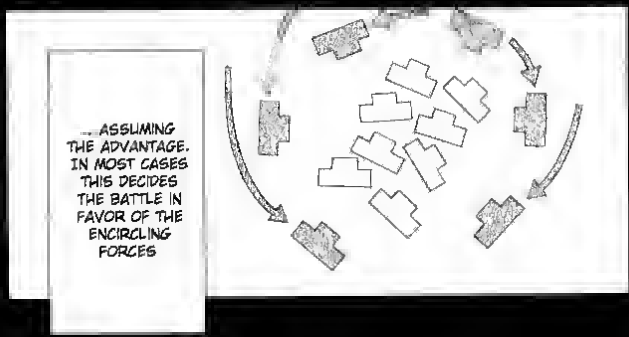
SLICE THOSE REBELS UP!
GO!
AAGH!
THWUNK
?!
THWUNK
SIR! INSURGENTS BEHIND US!
ARGH!
ROAR
RAAH
RAAH

RAAH
RAAH
ROAR
GEN... GENERAL DJOSER!
WHAT ?!
WE APPEAR TO BE SURROUNDED!
RAAH
ROAR
...AND BEARING DOWN FROM THE REAR!
THEY'RE ON BOTH FLANKS, SIR!

THEY'RE HEMMED IN, PRINCESS YURI!
WELL DONE, HADI!
CLOSE IN ON ALL SIDES AND CAPTURE GENERAL DJOSER!
KILL ONLY IF YOU HAVE TO! OUR QUARREL'S WITH THE ROYALS, NOT THE ARMY!
ROAR
SOME OF THE SOLDIERS MAY EVEN BE OF A MIND TO JOIN US!
ROAR
ROAR
AAH

A LATERAL TROOP SPREAD ..
... INDICATES A POSSIBLE ENCIRCLING OPERATION.
THE CENTER FUNCTIONS AS BAIT, DRAWING THE OPPONENT IN.


CENTER (MAIN) UNIT
RIGHT UNIT
LEFT UNIT
FAR RIGHT UNIT
EGYPTIAN TROOPS
MEANWHILE, THE OTHER UNITS MANEUVER AND CONVERGE ..


... ASSUMING THE ADVANTAGE. IN MOST CASES THIS DECIDES THE BATTLE IN FAVOR OF THE ENCIRCLING FORCES

STILL, IT TAKES AN EXCELLENT TACTICIAN TO SET IT UP AND PULL IT OFF
HOW DID THESE REBELS FIND SUCH A PERSON IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE...
COULD IT BE...?!

RAMSES' VILLA IN THEBES...
OH MY!..
THE REBELS OVER-POWERED THE KING'S TROOPS?
YES. THE BATTLE TOOK PLACE JUST SOUTH OF THEBES.
IT WAS, BY ALL I HEAR, A HUMILI-ATING DEFEAT.
GASP
HUSH!
THINGS IN EGYPT TODAY ARE REALLY...
I DON'T BLAME THEM, FRANKLY.
IT'S ALSO BEEN REPORTED THAT MORE THAN A FEW JOINED THE REBELS.
...WHILE MANY OF THE SOLDIERS SIMPLY FLED THE BATTLE.
I HEAR GENERAL DJOSER AND SEVERAL OF HIS OFFICERS WERE CAPTURED...

I JUST WALKED IN. THERE WERE NO GUARDS AT THE DOOR.
IS THAT WISE?
OH! PRINCESS YURI!
PRINCESS YURI!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU!
I'M SORRY, MA'AM..
.NEFERT .

I KNOW, BUT IT'S NOT SAFE TO BE ON THE STREETS RIGHT NOW.
AN ARMY OF REBELS APPEARS READY TO ATTACK THEBES.
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO HELP RAMSES, BUT IT'S BEEN HARD GOING.
...THAT I WAS GONE SO LONG.
...
AWFUL!
CLUTCH
ESK!
OH, NO! THAT'S TERRIBLE!
BUT SURELY THE ROYAL FAMILY WON'T STAND FOR IT!
YOU'D THINK SO...
...BUT SO FAR THEY HAVEN'T
NO DOUBT THEY'LL SET RAMSES FREE SO HE CAN DEFEND THE CAPITAL!

PRIN-CESS YURI....
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
OH... HE'S STILL AT THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S PALACE?
EXCUSE ME, PRINCESS YURI
OH, CER-TAINLY.
MAY I SEE YOU FOR A MOMENT, MA'AM?
..

ALL RIGHT..
NEFERTITI'S SHOWN HER STRIPES. IT'S PLAIN SHE HOLDS HERSELF ABOVE THE FORTUNES OF EGYPT.
..EVEN IF IT MEANS LETTING REBELS TAKE THEBES.
SHE'LL SEE RAMSES DIE FOR DARING TO OPPOSE HER.

NOTHING WILL SWAY HER..
...OR SO SHE BELIEVES! I GUESS WE'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE ABOUT THAT